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*Holiday chaplet
of stories, by A.L.O.E.*

Charlotte Maria Tucker



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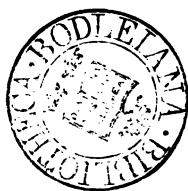
Tuesday, 13 June 2006













THE RIDE THROUGH THE SNOW.



250. g 310.



By

A. L. O. E.,

Author of "The Silver Casket," "The Robbers' Cave,"
"The Young Pilgrim," &c &c.



LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
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FAMOUS conjurer amused his audience by drawing from his hat nosegay after nosegay of flowers, and throwing them right and left, as gifts to whoever could catch them. Though A. L. O. E. is no conjurer, she draws plenty of Holiday Chaplets, (not from her hat, but her head,) and manages to fling them so far that little children in England, and Scotland, and other places besides, can catch them without any trouble.

Perhaps some who receive my story-flowers will say, "Oh! I have seen these before!" True, many of them grew on a bush that flourishes by some of your homes; the blossoms of my Chaplet have been found amidst the leaves of "THE CHILDREN'S PAPER." It has been a pleasure to me to gather these story-

flowers, and bind them together to form little Holiday Chaplets for my young friends, who will not, I hope, like them the less, because I have tried to sprinkle over each the dew-drops of kindly instruction.

A. L. O. E.





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HOLIDAY CHAPLET.

I.

Story of a Dog.

HOW CHARLIE FOUND A DOG.

 "LET you gone, you howling cur!" cried the porter of a work-house, as he kicked from the great door a poor dog that had vainly tried to creep through. The creature looked very thin and wretched, and yelped with pain as it limped away.

Little Charlie Rolle, who was passing that way with his mother, grew red with anger when he saw the cruel act, and heard the rough words. "How could you treat the dog so?" cried the boy.

"He has been prowling about here these three days, and yelping all night," said the porter.

"Perhaps he has lost some friend who has entered the house," suggested mild Mrs. Rolle.

"Ay, that's it," replied the porter; "he belonged to an old blind woman who has come in, and don't want a dog any more. We've enough of mouths to feed without keeping curs," he muttered, as he shut the large heavy door.

"Poor faithful dog!" cried Charlie; "so he has been trying for three days and nights to get to his old mistress, and has braved cuffs and kicks for her sake. And he may never be with her more. See—here he comes again. Oh, mamma, how thin he is; how his bones seem ready to break through the skin. I do believe that he has not eaten anything all day; poor fellow, poor fellow!" At the voice of kindness the wretched dog looked up and wagged his tail.

"Mamma, our house is not far off,—may I run on before you and ask our cook for a bone?"

"Indeed you may, Charlie," said the lady, who had a heart as kind as his own, and who

felt pity for the helpless creature that had lost his only friend.

Charlie ran so fast that he arrived quite breathless at the door of his home, and he rang so loudly that he brought up the servant in a hurry. "A bone," he cried out; "a bone for a poor starving dog!" and he could hardly bear to wait till Mary fetched it. Then he darted off with it in haste, meeting his mother half way.

They both returned to the spot where the hungry dog still lingered, with his eyes fixed on the closed door which shut him out from his friend.

"Here, poor fellow, here!" shouted Charlie, throwing the bone to the dog. The famished creature sprang at it, and began eating it as eagerly as if he had not tasted food for a week. Charlie stood looking on, and feeling more pleasure than he would have done had he been himself enjoying a feast.

HOW THE DOG FOUND A HOME.

"Mamma, I am so glad, so very glad that we met that poor dog," said Charlie, as he walked

towards home with his mother. "It is so pleasant to feed the hungry. Look, look, he is following behind us. Poor doggie, he knows his friends."

The dog indeed followed the lady and her son to the gate of their lawn, and then right up to the door of their house. He did not attempt to go in, but lay down on the doorstep, wagging his tail, and looking at Charlie, as the boy entered the house, with eyes that seemed to thank him.

Charlie could hardly speak or think of anything for the rest of the day, but the half-starved faithful dog.

The next morning he burst into his mother's room with, "Oh, mamma, the dog is still at our door! I do believe that he has been waiting there all night through. May we not take him in? may we not keep him in our yard? Since poor old Rollo died the kennel has been quite empty. If I might only have this faithful dog, I would treat him so kindly, and feed him so well; and what a jolly life he would lead."

"We might try what sort of a watch-dog he would make," said the lady, kindly.

"Oh, do—do!" cried Charlie, catching hold of her hand; "he will be kicked, and beaten, and starved, if left to wander about all alone."

"He is a Newfoundland dog," observed Mrs. Rolle.

"And I daresay that he will turn out a fine handsome fellow when he is properly fed and cared for. Only," added the boy more gravely, as another thought crossed his mind, "have we quite a *right* to keep him,—you know that he is not our dog."

"I am glad, my boy, that you remember to be honest as well as kind," said Mrs. Rolle, with a smile; "but there will be little difficulty, I think, in this case. I will go myself to the work-house, see the poor blind woman, and tell her about her dog. No doubt she will be but too glad to know that he is in safe hands."

Mrs. Rolle was as good as her word. Her kind visit sent a gleam of joy into the heart of poor blind Bessy. When the old pauper heard of her dog, tears came into her sightless eyes, and her voice trembled a little as she said, "Oh, keep him, kind lady, and welcome."

I'm thankful poor Frisk has found such friends. He'll be faithful to you, I'm sure, as he has been faithful to me. 'Twas a sore trouble to part with him,—he was my only comfort on earth. But he'll be better off with you than he ever was with poor Bessy, and I could not have him in here."

"When you have leave to walk out for a little, you may come to our house," said the lady, "and have a warm cup of tea, and let your faithful dog have a sight of his dear old mistress again."

The thin, wrinkled face of Bessy grew quite bright at the thought; and never did a week pass from that time without her finding her way to Mrs. Rolle's house, and receiving a loud barking welcome from her rough-coated friend.

HOW FRISK SURPRISED HIS MASTER.

Mrs. Rolle's house was but a very short distance from a large county town; but it had a nice lawn in front, with grass as smooth as velvet. Charlie and his sister Lucy were playing there one day, and Frisk was sporting beside them.

"Lucy," cried Charlie, "I have not paid you back the penny which you lent me to give blind Bessie on Friday. Here it is; will you catch it if I throw it?"

"No; don't throw it, Charlie," said Lucy, who, seated on the grass, was making a chain of daisies. "Put it into that basket beside you, and see if Frisk will be clever enough to bring it to me."

"Here, Frisk, take it," cried Charlie, throwing the penny into the basket. Frisk looked up eagerly, wagged his tail, and lifted the basket, as if he had been accustomed to carry one all his life. But great was the surprise of Charlie when, instead of taking the penny to Lucy, the dog turned round and trotted off, through the open gate, down the road, right towards the town, never looking behind him.

"Ho! holloa! stop thief!" shouted Charlie, jumping up from the grass.

"Oh, Charlie, where can he be going?" cried Lucy, looking in wonder after the dog.

"I'll be off and see!" exclaimed Charlie, running after Frisk as fast as his legs would carry him, without stopping to put on his cap, which he had thrown down on the lawn.

Frisk, as proud of his basket and penny as a soldier might be of his ribbon and medal, trotted on at a famous pace, until he reached a baker's shop, while Charlie ran laughing and panting behind him. A good-natured looking woman was standing beside the counter.

"Why, if this is not poor old Frisk here again!" she cried, in a tone of pleasure; "and he has brought his basket and penny as he used to do months ago. But, dear, how fat he has grown." She came forward, stooped, and patted the dog, who rubbed his nose against her gown, and seemed as glad to see her as she was to see him again. The woman then took the penny out of the basket, and put in two stale rolls instead; Frisk, her four-legged customer, looking on as if he understood all about it.

"Why," cried Charlie, bursting into laughter, "if Frisk is not buying two stale rolls with my penny."

"I did not know, little master, that the penny was yours," said the woman, smiling; "I never ask Frisk how he comes by his money. He has been accustomed to trot

here and buy bread for a poor blind woman, and he is as honest and steady as any customer can be."

"Oh, you clever old fellow!" cried Charlie, patting Frisk's shaggy coat, for he was much delighted with the dog. "But remember the next time that you go shopping for me, that I like fresh buns with plums better than stale rolls without them; and don't suppose, old friend, that I'll forget to give you your share."

HOW FRISK DID A KIND DEED.

"Oh, Charlie, Charlie!" cried little Lucy, as on one cold wintry morning she came running in haste from the gate through which she had been watching carriages pass, "two cruel, wicked boys have just done such a dreadful thing,—they have flung a poor kitten into the pond!"

"Can't we save it?" cried kind-hearted Charlie; and in a minute he had darted to the gate, and through it, and had reached the edge of the pond that was at the opposite side of the road.

There, indeed, was a poor kitten, vainly

struggling in the mud half-frozen water, much too far from the edge for little Charlie to reach it.

"I'll run for the garden rake," cried the boy.

"Oh, you'll be too late!" exclaimed Lucy, who had followed her brother, and who now stood wringing her hands and ready to burst out crying. "See, the poor thing is sinking!"

Lucy had no time to say more;—there was a sudden splash in the pond, and then Frisk's head was seen above it as he swam, as if he were swimming for his life, towards the place where the poor kitten was sinking in the choking waters.

"That's it; well done, Frisk; go it, old dog!" shouted Charlie, in great excitement. "Hurrah! he has reached her—he has saved her!" Charlie clapped his hands for joy; while Lucy, too anxious to cry out, eagerly watched the motions of the dog.

Frisk had indeed got firm hold of the drowning kitten; and now, turning round, he swam more slowly with his burden in his mouth, till he reached the edge of the pond. He then scrambled on shore, shook a shower

of drops from his shaggy sides, and running up to Lucy, laid the dripping, half-drowned looking creature at her feet.

"Oh, it is dead!" cried the pitying child.

"I'm sure that it is not," said Charlie; "don't you see it is moving its tail? Take it home, and warm and dry it. Oh, Frisk, my fine fellow, you were just in time. You deserve a medal, you do." And while Lucy ran into the house with the kitten, Charlie remained for a few seconds to pat and to praise his faithful dog, which jumped about in high glee.

Charlie was right, the kitten was not dead; it lived to be as merry a kitten as ever played with a ball, or ran round and round after its tail. The children called it Brisk, it was so quick and playful. I cannot say whether the kitten long remembered its ducking, or was grateful to its preserver; but Frisk and Brisk were always fast friends; the dog never growled at the cat, the cat never snarled at the dog. Brisk became an excellent mouser, while Frisk was the faithful guard to the house, and many a merry frolic they had both with Charlie and Lucy.



II.

Lobly and Wise.



“BUT I will have it!”

“But you shan’t!”

The loud, angry words were followed by the sound of a struggle, which brought Mrs. Clare out of her room in haste, to see what was the cause of the strife between her little son Maitland, and his cousin Frederick Gray.

The two boys had both hold of the staff of a flag, and were pulling and tugging at it, each trying hard to wrench it out of the hand of the other. Both their faces were red with passion, and they hardly stopped their struggling even when the lady entered the room.

“Boys, what are you quarrelling about!” cried Mrs. Clare, with displeased surprise.

“Mamma, we’re going to play at soldiers,

and I want to carry the flag," answered Maitland, scarcely able to speak from passion.

"I must have it—I shall have it!" cried Fred, still trying to wrench it from his cousin.

"Give it to me," said the lady in a decided tone, taking it from the grasp of both of the boys. "See, you have torn the pretty flag in your struggle! To which of you does it belong?"

"Uncle gave it to us both," replied Fred; "but I choose to carry it, because I am the elder."

"I must have it, because my father is a soldier, and I am going to be a soldier myself!" cried Maitland, still looking very fierce.

"I am sorry, boys, to see that you have less sense than four-footed beasts."

"What do you mean, mamma?" said Maitland.

"Your quarrel reminds me of a story of two goats which I have heard," replied the lady, seating herself on a chair, still holding the flag in her hand. "On a wild mountain in the Tyrol, two goats met on a ledge just over a precipice, a ledge which was so narrow that there was neither room for them to pass



THE TWO GOATS.

Page 22.

each other, nor to turn round and go back. A steep rock rose straight above them, a deep dark chasm lay below! What do you think that the two goats did!"

"I suppose," said Maitland, "that if they had horns, like my two little goats, they pushed, and butted, and fought, till one or both of them were tossed over the precipice and killed."

"You suppose that they were as proud, and silly, and quarrelsome, as two little boys whom I need not name," said Mrs. Clare, shaking her head. "No; the goats were more lowly and more wise. One of them quietly and carefully laid himself down on the narrow ledge; then bent first one leg under his body, then the other, pressing as close to the rock as he could. Then the second goat, gently and softly stepped over his companion, till, safe on the further side, he could lightly bound away. The goat that had lain down then drew himself up from his lowly position, safe and uninjured, free to spring again from rock to rock, and crop the sweet herbage, instead of lying, as he might otherwise have done, at the bottom of the precipice, with all his bones broken by a fall."



"What a wise goat he was!" exclaimed Fred.

"I did not know that goats had such sense," cried Maitland. "I wonder if my two little Billys that I drive in my go-cart would have done just the same as those creatures."

"If so," observed Mrs. Clare with a smile, "they would have shown much more sense than their master."

"I don't see that one is bound always to give up one's rights!" cried Maitland, glancing at the flag, for he saw that his mother was thinking of his conduct in fighting for that.

"The right of way belonged to one goat just as much as to the other," remarked the lady; "but the wisest was the lowliest; with him to stoop was to conquer, by letting another be first he saved the lives of both. Oh, my child, if instinct taught this to a poor four-footed beast, shall beings with reason fight and quarrel, and above all"—the mother gently laid her hand on the head of her child as she added, "shall Christians dispute about trifles, when they know where it is written, *Blessed are the meek, and with the lowly is wisdom?*"

Maitland looked doubtfully at his mother, pride was having a little struggle within ; but Fred cried out frankly at once, " Let him have the flag ! I'm sorry that I quarrelled about it."

" No, no, you shall have it !" exclaimed Maitland, more moved by his cousin's kindness than by even the lesson of his mother.

" You shall both carry it by turns, my boys," said the lady, " when I have mended the rent which you tore. Let this little incident impress on you the truth that we often gain most by yielding ; and that he is the wisest and noblest who can stoop, for the sake of conscience, to take the lowliest place."





III.

The Crow and the Pitcher.



A CROW, that was very thirsty, flew to a pitcher, hoping to find some water in it. Water there was, but so little of it, that with all her efforts the poor crow could not so much as wet the tip of her bill. "Never despair," said the crow to herself; "where there's a will there's a way!" A clever thought came into her little black head; she could not get down to the water, but she might make the water rise up to her. The crow picked up a pebble, and dropped it into the pitcher; another, and then another. All sank to the bottom at once, and the water rose in the jar. Before the crow had dropped in ten pebbles, her industry was rewarded, and she drank at her ease of the water which, but for her clever

thought, she would never have been able to reach.

WEIGHING AN ELEPHANT.

"MAMMA," said Teddy Smith, "are we taught any lesson by the fable of the 'Crow and the Pitcher?'"

"Certainly not," cried Lily, his merry little sister; "for we don't drink water out of pitchers, but out of glasses, or nice china mugs. We can never be puzzled like the crow; and if we drop in anything it is a lump of sugar, not a pebble!"

"But we may be puzzled about other things, Lily," observed her mother with a smile. "The fable is to teach us that a little *thought* may show us a way out of difficulties which, without it, we could not get through."

"Will you give us an example?" asked Teddy.

"An Eastern king," said his mother, "had been saved from some great danger, and, to show his gratitude for deliverance, he vowed to give to the poor the weight of his favourite elephant in silver."

"Oh, what a great, great quantity that would be!" cried Lily, opening her merry eyes very wide. "A huge creature like an elephant would weigh fifty times more than all our forks, and spoons, and shillings, and half-crowns put in a heap together?"

"But how *could* you weigh an elephant?" asked Teddy, who was a quiet, reflecting boy.

"There was the difficulty," said Mrs. Smith. "Perhaps the king began to think that he had promised too much, and wanted to avoid giving at all, for he declared that unless a way could be found of weighing his heavy beast with little trouble and no expense, not a single piece of silver would he think himself bound to bestow."

"That was shabby!" cried Lily.

"Or the king had a fancy to try whether his people had brains," observed Teddy.

"The wise and learned men of the court put their heads together, and stroked their long beards, and talked the matter over, but none found out how to weigh the elephant of the king."

"Why, they would have needed scales with

a pole as tall as a poplar, and saucers as big as this room!" cried Lily.

"At last," continued the lady, "a poor old sailor, wise like the crow in the fable, found safe and simple means by which to weigh the enormous beast. The thousands and thousands of pieces of silver were counted out to the people, and crowds of poor were relieved by the clever thought of the sailor."

"Oh, mamma," cried Lily, "do tell us what it was!"

"Stop! stop!" interrupted Teddy, "I want to think for myself—think hard—and find out how an elephant's exact weight could be known, with little trouble, and no expense."

"Ah," cried Lily, with a merry little laugh; "you want to be as clever as the crow!"

"I am well pleased," said their mother, "that my Teddy should set his mind to work on the subject. If he can find out the sailor's secret before night, he shall have that peach for his pains."

Would any little reader like to shut the book now, and try to make out the puzzle like Teddy?

The boy thought hard, and thought long.

Lily laughed at her brother's grave looks, as he sat leaning his head on his hand. Often she teased him with the question, "Can you weigh an elephant, Teddy?"

At last, as he was eating his supper, Teddy, who had been very silent, suddenly struck his fist on the table, and cried, "I think that I have it now!"

"Do you mean that you have found out an easy fashion of weighing an elephant?" asked his mother.

"I think that I have," said the boy.

"How would you do it?" cried Lily.

"First, I'd have one of the king's big boats brought very close to the shore, and have planks laid across, so that the elephant could walk right into the boat."

"Oh, such a great, heavy beast would make it sink low in the water!" cried Lily.

"Of course it would," said her brother. "Then I would mark on the outside of the boat the exact height to which the water had risen all round it, while the elephant was inside. That done, back my big beast should march to the shore, leaving the boat quite empty, and floating light as a cork."

"But I don't see the use of all this," said Lily.

"Do you not?" cried her brother, in surprise. "Why, I should only then have to bring the heaps of silver, and throw them into the boat, till their weight should sink it exactly to the mark made when the elephant was in it. That would show that the weights of each were the same."

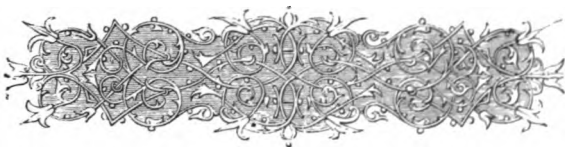
"How funny and clever!" cried Lily; "you would make a weighing-machine of the boat?"

"That is my plan," answered Teddy.

"That was the sailor's plan," said his mother. "You have earned the peach, my boy;" and she gave it to him with a smile.

"And you have shown," laughed Lily, "that in a difficulty you could manage as well as the crow in the fable!"





IV.

The Ass in the Lion's Skin.



AN ass finding the skin of a lion, put it on, and in the disguise of the king of beasts soon sent the more timid animals scampering in terror before her. The fox alone showed no fear.

“What!” brayed the ass, “are you not frightened? Do you not dread the lion’s terrible jaws?”

“Ah! my good friend,” said the fox, “creatures at a distance may be alarmed at sight of the tawny hide of the lion; but I have come near enough to hear the bray and spy the long ears of the ass!”

Those who try to inspire respect by false pretences are sure to betray themselves in the end,

FALSE PRETENCES.

"You say that your father keeps a butler and footman, why that's nothing!" exclaimed Master Tom Talkaway in a pompous tone to one of the group of schoolfellows amongst whom he had come for the first time. "*My* father keeps six men and two boys," added the young boaster, looking round him with an air of triumph.

"I say!" exclaimed Jack, one of the boys whose mother could only afford to have one general servant.

"Oh, you should see how we go on in London!" cried Tom; "you've not a notion of real high life in a poor little village like this. Why," he continued in his swaggering way, sticking his thumbs into the pockets of his waistcoat, "I've seen five, six, seven carriages waiting before father's door, and the most of them had coronets on them."

"I say!" repeated poor Jack; while the other boys exchanged looks of surprise, scarcely knowing whether to believe their companion or not.

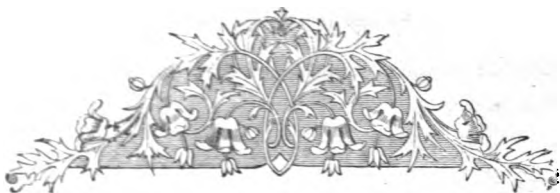
Mr. Gilbert, the usher, who had been sitting

by the window reading, raised his eyes from his book.

"Tom Talkaway," he quietly said, "I happen to know about your father: he is a respectable haberdasher in London, and, for aught that I know, may keep six men in his shop and two boys to carry his parcels; nor should I be surprised if some of his customers came in carriages even with coronets on them."


Tom was thunderstruck at these words; his thumbs were pulled out of his pockets, he flushed up to the roots of his hair. There was a general roar of laughter from his school-fellows, and cries of "look at the great son and heir of the haberdasher!" which increased the boy's confusion.

"Hush!" cried the usher, raising his hand to command silence. "There is *nothing* to be ashamed of in *honest trade*, but a *great deal* to be ashamed of in *dishonest pretence*; and," he added, looking sternly at Tom, "it is only the *ass* that puts on the skin of the lion, and he is sure soon to be found out, and to meet the scorn which he merits."



V.

The Cross Scissors.

 **W**HY must we always keep together, fastened up tight by that tiresome screw?" so cried one of the two sides of a pair of scissors. "How much more work we could do apart! Each of us has a sharp point, each has a round ring at the end to hold a finger or thumb, and each has an edge for cutting. We don't care to keep together; we don't choose to keep together. If we can't get rid of that screw, we'll be as wide apart as we can!"

So the two points of the scissors were stuck out on each side as wide as they could go, and so were the two round rings, till they looked as cross as could be. But the silly pair of scissors soon found out what a great mistake had been made. Some silk was placed between

the two points, which it was their duty to divide; but it was very clear that no cutting could be done while they remained apart.

"After all, I can't get on without you," said the right side to the left.

"Let us kiss and be friends," said the left hand to the right.

So the two rings touched, and the two tips kissed, and the silk was divided with ease.

Little brothers and sisters, who do not love or help one another, who like to keep as much apart as you can, both in your work and your play, remember the story of the scissors! Be glad of the tie that binds you; join little hands, join little hearts, so your work will be done more quickly, and your play more merrily enjoyed!





VI.

The Two Patients.



AY, little Tommy, do not shrink away, as if I meant to do you harm. If a thorn has been left in your finger for days, and if the poor finger is swelled and sore, and cannot get well till the thorn is out, is it wise to cry, and pull back your hand, and not let your mother look at the place? There, hold it out now, like a brave little man, and while I am doing all that I can to relieve you, I'll tell you a tale of a poor dog that was much more hurt than you are.

A doctor found in the street a poor spaniel that had broken one of its legs. The man had a kindly heart, so he took the dog to his home, set its bone, put splinters round it, and wrapped it up in bandages, in hopes that the

leg might be healed. I do not think that the spaniel struggled and howled as you did two minutes ago, though the doctor, kind as he was, must have given a good deal of pain.

There, Tommy, the thorn is out ; you can see it on the point of my needle, and like a good brave boy you never uttered a cry, when you felt the prick. Now while I bathe and bandage the finger, I will tell you more of the dog.

The spaniel's leg grew quite strong and well. The doctor sent the dog home, as he knew to whom he belonged. But he had not seen the last of his patient. Some time afterwards the doctor heard a whining and scraping at his door, and when he opened it, who should be there but his old friend the spaniel, and with him a poor lame dog that could hardly limp along. The spaniel jumped and wagged his tail, rubbed his nose against the doctor, and looked up in his face, asking him, as plainly as dog could ask, to do the same kind office for his friend, as he had done for himself. The doctor could not resist the sensible creature's appeal. He bound up the leg of the second dog both with kindness and

skill, and the poor creature, much relieved, limped slowly away, with the friend who had so wisely brought him to the place where he himself had found a cure.

Now your finger is bandaged up, Tommy, I have played the doctor's part, and hope in a few days to see that all is as well as ever. And if Mary or Lucy, when gathering blackberries in the wood, manage to run a thorn into a poor little finger, do not let her wait till it fester and swell like your own, but play the part of the wise little dog, and bring her here to the doctor at once.





VII.

A good Book deserves a good Binding.



"H! how tired I am of being so often told to hold up my head, and keep my hair smooth and my dress neat!" exclaimed Flora. "I am sure, mamma, that you would not wish me to be like that little girl who called here last week: she was as neat and nice as if she had come out of a bandbox, and I never saw any one hold herself so straight, or walk so well; but what nonsense I heard her talk, what silly, unkind things she said. You would rather have me a good child, mamma, than like that foolish little girl?"

"I should be very sorry for you to copy her, or any one else, in what is wrong, but glad for you to resemble her in what is worthy of praise."

Flora looked as if she did not understand.

"Pray fetch me the two books which lie on that table," continued the mother.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Flora, as she obeyed, "how different the two books look. The one so beautifully bound, and as fresh as if it had never been opened; the other with broken back, and half of the leaves falling out."

"Which of them do you like best, my Flora?"

Flora was going eagerly to cry out, "The one in gold and purple," but she was wise enough to stop short and say, "I cannot tell, dear mamma, as I have not read either."

Mrs. Mason smiled at the answer. "It is well that you are so cautious, my child. The purple book contains a silly French novel; it was given to me long ago, and I found it to be not worth the reading. It has lain in my drawer for years, and I have only taken it out now in order to burn the worthless contents, and make a blotting-book of the cover. The other volume," and she took up the tattered book as she spoke, "is the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' one of the best works that ever was written."

"Oh! mamma," exclaimed Flora, "does not so good a book deserve a good cover?"

Again Mrs. Mason stroked down the girl, she replied, "I want to have its torn and rough edges smoothed for my little daughter. I do for my book. They are so untidy and I care to find out where their looks. The book, as we all know, is an important part of the heart. But neat appearances are by no means to Lady Teignmouth's book deserves a good






VIII.

The Two Pets.

A FABLE.

 H, Poll! Poll!" cried the little spaniel Fidele to the new favourite of the family, "how every one likes you and pets you!"

"No wonder," replied the parrot, cocking her head on one side with a very conceited air. "Just see how pretty I am! With your rough hairy coat, and your turned-up nose, who would look at you beside me! Just observe my plumage of crimson and green, and the fine feather head-dress which I wear!"

"I know that you are a beauty," said Fidele, "and that I'm only an ugly little dog."

"Then how clever I am," continued Miss

Parrot, after a nibble at her biscuit. "No human beings are likely to care for you, for you can't speak one word of their language."

"I wish that I could learn it," said Fidele.

"You've only to copy me." And then in her harsh grating voice the parrot cried, "What's o'clock?"

"Bow-wow!" barked Fidele.

"Do your duty!" screamed the bird.

"Bow-wow!" barked the dog.

"There's not a chance that any one will ever care for you, ugly stupid spaniel," cried Miss Poll. "You may just creep off to your kennel, you are not fit company for a learned beauty like me."

Poor Fidele made no complaint, but he felt sad as he trotted off to his corner. Before Poll's arrival at the Hall, the spaniel had been the favourite playmate of all Mrs. Donathorn's children. They had taught him to fetch and carry, to toss up a biscuit placed on his nose and catch it cleverly in his mouth, or to jump into the water and bring a stick that had been flung to ever so great a distance. But as soon as pretty Poll came, no one seemed to care for Fidele any more. To teach the parrot

to speak was the great delight of the children. They shouted and clapped their hands when she screamed out "Pretty Poll,"—"What's o'clock?" or, "Do your duty." Stupid Fidele! he could not be taught to speak. Ugly Fidele! who could for a moment compare him to a beautiful parrot. So all the kind words, and soft pats, and sweet biscuits, were given to Poll. It is true that she made little Tommy once cry out with pain from a bite from her sharp beak,—and that the least thing that displeased her would make her ruffle up her feathers in a very ill-tempered way; but still she was petted and praised for her cleverness and her beauty; and she quite despised poor Fidele, who was nothing but an ugly hairy dog.

One fine summer's day the children carried the stand of their favourite to the bank of the pretty little river which flowed through their mother's grounds. Bessy and Jemmy amused themselves by feeding and chatting with the parrot, while little Tommy gathered daisies and buttercups, or rolled about on the grass. No one cared for Fidele; no one noticed what he was doing.

Presently Bessy and Jemmy were startled by a scream, and then a sudden splashing noise in the water. Poor little Tommy, eager to pull some blue forget-me-nots which grew quite close to the brink, had overbalanced himself and tumbled right into the stream. Oh, what was the terror of the children when they heard the splash, and saw the wide circles on the water where their poor little brother was sinking.

“Do your duty!” screamed the parrot, merely talking by rote, and not caring a feather for the danger of the child, or the distress of his brother and sister.

At that moment there was heard another splash in the water, and then the brown nose and hairy back of Fidele were seen in the stream, as the little dog swam with all his might to save the drowning child. He caught little Tommy by his clothes; he pulled—he tugged—he dragged him towards the shore, just within reach of the eagerly stretched-out hands of Jemmy.

“Oh, he is saved! he is saved!” cried Bessy, as Tommy was dragged out of the river, dripping, choking, spluttering, crying.

but not seriously hurt. He was instantly carried back to the house, undressed, and put into a warm bed ; and the little one was soon none the worse for his terrible ducking and fright.

"Oh, you dear—you darling dog !" cried Bessy, as she caught up Fidele, all wet as he was, and hugged him with grateful affection. "I will always love you, and care for you, for you were a true friend in need."

"Pretty Poll !" screamed the parrot, who did not like any one to be noticed but herself.

"Fidele is better than pretty ; he is brave, and useful, and good," cried Bessy.

"Do your duty !" screamed out Miss Poll.

"Ah, Poll, Poll, it is one thing to prate about duty, and another thing to *do it*," said Bessy. "Fine words are good, to be sure, but *fine acts* are a great deal better."


MORAL.

Beauty and cleverness may win much notice for a time ; but it is he who is faithful, good, and true, who is valued and loved at the end.



IX.

Present and Future.

 "HY, Phœbe, what are you doing?" said a mother to her little daughter. "You are stripping the blossoms from your cherry-tree to make a May-garland for the hall!"

"There are no flowers so pretty, mother. Ella has violets and primroses, wild anemone, and cuckoo-flowers, but no one has such lovely blossoms, or can show such a garland as mine."

"But remember, my child," said the mother, "that we cannot look for fruit in the summer, if we pluck our blossoms in spring."

"Summer is far off," cried Phœbe; "I will weave my May-garland now."

But when the bright summer came, and mellow fruit loaded the orchard trees, and Phœbe's little companions gathered clusters of sweet ripe cherries, sadly the poor child gazed

on her own bare boughs, where not one round berry appeared. Where was her garland then? Alas, it had withered in a day! She had had her pleasure, it was past, and only regret was left behind.

If we live but for the pleasures and amusements of the present, we shall one day find, to our grief, that we cannot look for fruit in the summer if we pluck our blossoms in spring.





X.

Justice and Generosity.



“AM going to give Matilda a present, such a splendid present !” cried Vincent, who was gayly chatting to his mother, while, with pencil in hand, she was trying to take his likeness.

“I have just been given two half-crowns, and I will buy her a little orange-tree, with flowers and fruit upon it ; she has long been wishing to have one. Won’t that be generous, mamma ?”

“I thought, my boy,” said the lady, as she glanced up from her drawing, “that you owed old Martin a china jug, as you broke that which you borrowed last week.”

“Oh, I don’t care for spending my money in that way,” cried Vincent ; “I like to do what is handsome and generous : there’s nothing so stupid as paying old debts.”

"Is not justice as much a virtue as generosity, Vincent?"

"It is not so much to my mind. If a boy has a generous spirit, and gives away his cash freely, he need not be so very particular about remembering every trifle."

"A character is very faulty, Vincent, where one quality—even a good one—is indulged at the expense of the rest. In a well-ordered mind each virtue has its place, and performs its part; we can make no excuse for the absence of one because we think that we possess another."

Vincent thought the conversation very tiresome, since, instead of being praised for generosity, he was blamed for want of justice. He jumped up from his seat, and asked to be allowed to look for a minute at the likeness which his mother was taking.

"Oh, mamma, you've drawn that right eye splendidly!" he cried; "it looks just like a real one! Now you must put in the other. What a capital likeness you will make!" and Vincent looked with some pleasure and pride at the beautiful outline of his face, with the long ringlets hanging around it, which his mother had traced on the paper.

"Now I will draw the left eye," said the lady.

"Stop, stop!" cried the astonished Vincent. "Dear mamma, that never will do! You have made one eye as large as my own, and the other no bigger than a pea!"

"The right eye looks well enough," observed the lady, "and the shape of the head is correct."

"But the face will be frightful, quite frightful, mamma, if the eyes do not match each other at all! You will spoil the whole picture at once! No one who looks at it will think of anything but that wretched little dot of an eye! Please—please don't go on with that drawing, or make my two eyes alike!"

Mrs. Vane smiled as she laid down her pencil, took up her india-rubber, and effaced the ill-shapen eye. "What offends you in my sketch," she observed, "is just what offends me in your character, Vincent. Justice and generosity are as its two eyes; however fine the one may be, it gives no real beauty if counterbalanced by a great defect in the other. There should be an even balance of opposite virtues; firmness and gentleness, courage and


meekness, generosity and justice helping while controlling each other, each keeping its own proper place. A character in which one set of good qualities is fostered to the neglect of others as precious, is like a face crooked and deformed, however fine some features may be."





XI.

Never mind Scoffs.

 " 'LL splash that duck all over! I'll make it as wet as a sponge in the water! I'll soon take out all the shine from its green and glittering neck!"

So cried little Guy, as with both hands he flung water at the beautiful bird. But calmly the duck swam on; its rich plumage was dry, not a drop would rest upon it, and bright as ever in the sunlight shone its green and glittering neck.

"I shall pelt it with water from my squirt!" cried Guy; "I shall certainly wet it at last, and make its feathers like those of the dead pigeon which I found yesterday in the brook!"

Yet calmly the duck swam on; its rich plumage was dry, not a drop would rest upon

it, and bright as ever in the sunlight shone its green and glittering neck.

Why was the duck never wet, though the boy in his malice threw so much water upon it? Because nature has given it oil on its feathers, that throws off the moisture at once. Even when the bird dives in the stream, it rises unwetted and unstained.


When we are pelted with scoffs and words of unkindness, let the *oil of patience* keep our temper unruffled, and then they have no more real power to harm us than water to injure a duck. There are those who laugh and mock at others for refusing to join them in evil: they pelt them with bitter jests, and try to throw shame upon them. Are not such acting the part of Guy? Let all who are laughed at for doing right go steadily on their way; shame cannot rest upon them, nor dim the brightness of a character that will shine but the more clearly for such vain attempts to blot it.





XII.

The Little Wanderer.



"O not tease that poor creature," said a gentleman to an idle boy who was throwing pebbles at a watchdog chained in a yard, laughing as he made him bark, and growl, and strain at his chain. "It is unjust to torment him, for the dog harms no one; it is cruel, for it gives needless pain; it is cowardly, for were he not chained you would not dare to provoke him."

"He's but a dog," muttered the boy.

"Ever since I owed my life to a dog," said the gentleman, "I never could bear to see one ill-treated."

"How could you owe your life to a dog?" asked the boy, with a little surprise.

"When I was a boy," said the gentleman,

"I did not always live in England, but spent some months with my parents on the lower part of a mountain of the Alps which is named St. Bernard. We lived in a pretty wooden cottage, there called a *châlet*, with a roof very steep and sloping, to let the snow fall off it, and heavy stones at the corners to prevent the winds blowing it away."

"What a strange place to live in," said the boy.

"Higher up on the mountain was a great stone building, called the Monastery of St. Bernard, where a number of monks used to live. I had heard that these monks were kind to travellers passing along that wild, cold, dreary mountain, and that they kept dogs to help them in finding poor people lost in the snow ; but I had—at the time that I am speaking of—never been so high as the monastery, for being but a child, I had not had the strength to go so far."

"Had you a happy life there?" asked the boy.

"It was a wild, free, pleasant life. I loved to climb as high as I could, and pluck the pretty pink and purple flowers that grew on the soft green moss, and look at the glorious

mountains around, when the glow of sunset reddened their peaks of snow. But I was not contented with this. I heard of bold travellers climbing to the tops of mountains, and without stopping to think that it would be folly in a child to attempt what a strong man might do, I resolved to steal off some day when my parents were absent from home, and try to reach some very high peak, and look down at the world through the clouds."

"Why must you wait till your parents were absent?" asked the boy.

"Because they had strictly forbidden me ever to go beyond sight of the chalet. My sinful disobedience, as you shall hear, nearly cost me my life."

"My parents set off one afternoon to visit a friend. I knew that they would not return till night, and as the servant whom they left behind always let me be much by myself, I thought that this was a favourable time for me to carry out my plan. I took my father's big stick to help me in climbing, and as soon as my parents had set off in one direction, I hurried away in the other. I was so eager that I fancy that I must have gone on for

hours before I thought about being tired. Up and up I went, but the higher the spot I reached, the higher the mountain seemed to grow. At last, quite weary and faint, and panting with the toil of climbing, I sat down and looked around me. The view was, no doubt, very fine, but the place looked to me very dreary and wild ; there was not a sound to be heard, not even the tinkle of a sheep-bell. I began to feel lonely, frightened, and hungry, and thought that I had better go back. Then a big flake of snow came floating down through the air, and fell on my dress. A great many more soon followed. I shook them off again and again, but they came on faster and faster, and covered the ground all around, and hid the path and the track of my feet. Then I was frightened indeed ; for how should I find my way back. The evening was closing in, the air grew fearfully cold, and I knew that should I remain there all night, I should be frozen to death before morning."

"You must have been sorry that you had not obeyed your parents," said the boy.

"The most terrible thought to me then, as I shivered and trembled with cold and fear,

was the thought that all this trouble had come upon me because of my disobedience. I knew that I had displeased God, and I feared the punishment which he might send. Stiff and tired as I was, I made many an attempt to find my way down the mountain ; but I had completely lost the track, and did not know so much as whether to turn to the right or the left. I called out, but no one replied. All now was growing dark around me, except the white glimmering snow. The heavy flakes still were falling, I sank ankle-deep at each step that I took. At last, quite exhausted, I sank down on the snow, and cried bitter tears, which almost froze on my cheeks. I sobbed out a prayer to God ; I begged him to forgive my sin, and for my poor parents' sake not let me die on the mountains ; my mind seemed to grow quite confused, I could no more pray or think, I either slept or fainted."

"What a dreadful night of it you had!" cried the boy.

"The first thing which I remember when I awoke, was the feeling of warm breath on my cheek, and then it was touched by what seemed the muzzle of some animal. I started and



THE RESCUE.

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screamed with terror. I need not have been afraid, a true friend was beside me. One of the monks' brave dogs, large and strong, had found its way through the snow, guided doubtless by its power of scent, or rather by a kind Providence, to the spot where lay a poor half-frozen child."

"That was a mercy indeed !"

"I soon found," continued the gentleman, "that I had nothing to fear from the dog. He licked me, breathed on me, rubbed me with his rough hairy coat, tried to rouse me to motion, and showed me a little cask of drink which the monks had tied round his neck. When I had managed with my stiff trembling fingers to open that cask, and had drunk of its warming contents, I felt the life coming back to my limbs. I could not, indeed, yet walk, but I dragged myself on to the dog's shaggy back, and gave myself up to his guidance. The noble creature, with his heavy burden, bravely struggled through the snow, nor rested till he had carried me to the monastery door. There I was sheltered, fed, and warmed, and placed in a comfortable bed. Never shall I forget my joy when I again heard the sound of a



THE RESCUE.

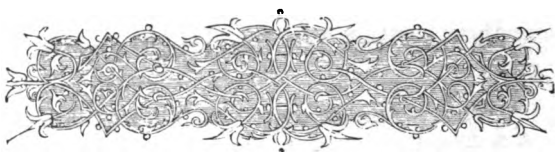
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human voice, and saw the bright glow of a fire."

"What a famous dog!" exclaimed the boy.

"I heard afterwards that that dog, whose name was Barry, had been the means of saving no fewer than *forty lives*! When his useful career was ended, his body was carefully buried, and his skin, stuffed to look like life, was placed in the museum of Berne. Honour to the memory of that noble creature, whose course of active usefulness and kindness puts to shame that of too many of the more gifted race of man. Remember his history, my lad, and for the sake of brave old Barry never illtreat a dog."





XIII.

Winter Songs.



"HAPPY New Year to you, Miss Dora, and many of them!" were the words with which Dora Sinclair was awakened on the 1st of January, from sweet slumber and pleasant dreams.

"O Janet!—I hope—I hope that the morning is fine!" exclaimed the eager little girl almost before she had time to open her eyes. "Shall we be able to go to Mount Blane? Oh, don't shake your head and say no! It is not raining, I'm sure that it is not, or I'd hear the pattering against the pane!"

"No, Miss, the snow makes no noise! It is coming down thick and soft, as if the clouds were all made of feathers; and it lies quite deep on the ground; it must have been falling all night."

Dora would not believe the bad news, till she herself had thrown open the shutters and looked out on the lawn and drive, all clothed in a robe of spotless white.

"Horrid snow!" cried Dora impatiently. "But perhaps," she added, "it will stop, and we shall go to Mount Blane after all."

"Put that from your thoughts, my dear. The road through the valley wouldn't be fit for travelling after such a fall. Your papa would never think of driving that distance through the snow. Besides, Miss Mary's cold is worse, she has been coughing half the night; she could not venture out now, even if the snow were to stop."

"We could go without her!" cried Dora.

"No; your mamma said last night that all would depend on your sister's losing her cold; and now the snow has come on, so there is not a chance of your going."

Dora knew only too well that what the nurse said was true, but she did not choose to believe it. All the time that she was getting ready for breakfast she spoke of nothing but the certainty that the snow-storm would soon be over, running every five minutes to

the window to see if the flakes still fell. Dora went on hoping until a message came from her father which settled the question at once. The trip must be put off, he said, till the days were longer and the weather more mild. Dora was so bitterly disappointed that she burst into a passion of tears.

"It is always so!" cried the angry little girl; "whenever one hopes for a pleasure, the weather is sure to spoil it! Tiresome snow! tiresome cough! tiresome day! What a wretched beginning is this to the year that I thought would be so happy!"

And so, with tears in her eyes, discontent in her heart, and murmuring words on her lips, the ungrateful girl sat down to the plentiful meal provided for her comfort! Dora never thought of the love which year after year had spread her table, and filled her cup, and richly supplied all her need. A single disappointment was enough to make her forget a thousand blessings which she never had earned, never deserved, but which her heavenly Father had showered on her from her birth!

"Ey, Miss Dora, I wonder you are not ashamed!" cried the nurse. "Just hear that

robin redbreast singing outside in the cold !
Poor bird, the winter must come hard upon
him ! His breakfast lies under the snow !
He has no basin of nice hot milk, no blazing
fire to warm him ; yet he sits on the bare
leafless bough, and warbles as if it were
spring ! You might learn a lesson of content
from the brave little bird in the snow ! ”

Dora dried her eyes and ran to the window ;
she knew the note of her favourite robin.
She threw open the casement, and in another
minute her little friend with the scarlet breast
was hopping on to her finger !

“ Come in, pretty birdie ! ” she cried ;
“ come in and share my breakfast ! I love
the nightingale and the linnet, that sing when
the hedges are green, and the meadows gay,
and the sun shining bright and warm ; but I
love better the little robin that hops about on
the frosty ground, and sings on the leafless
tree ! ”

The flakes were falling no longer ; the red
wintry sun had come out, and hung like a
ball of fire in the sky.

“ Dora, my child, ” said her mother, “ put on

your warm cloak and your bonnet. You may carry this shawl and basket of good things as a New-Year's gift from me to poor blind Bessy at the lodge."

Dora willingly obeyed. Impatient and selfish as she had appeared in the morning, there was kindness in the little girl's heart,—it was a pleasure to her to give pleasure. Cheerfully Dora tramped through the snow, leaving deep foot-prints behind her. She could now admire the soft white covering which spread over the earth, and lay on the dark green leaves of the laurel and holly, and made the roofs of the dwellings look purer and brighter than marble!

As Dora approached the lodge, tripping noiselessly over the snow, she heard the sound of singing within ringing sweet through the frosty air. So clear was the voice of the blind girl that Dora caught most of the words:—

BLIND GIRL'S SONG.

I cannot *see* the sunny gleam
Which gladdens every eye but mine;
But I can *feel* the warming beam,
And bless the God who made it shine.
O Lord! each murmuring thought control,
Let no repining tear-drop fall;

Pour heavenly light upon my soul,
And let me see thy love in all.

I cannot *see* the roses bloom,
All sparkling with the summer showers;
But I can *breathe* their sweet perfume,
And bless the God who made the flowers.
O Lord! each murmuring thought control,
Let no repining tear-drop fall;
Pour heavenly light upon my soul,
That I may see thy love in all.

I cannot *see* the pages where
Thy holy will is written, Lord;
But I can seek thy house of prayer,
And humbly *listen* to thy word,
Which lifts my hopes to that blest place
Where I at thy dear feet shall fall,
Behold my Saviour face to face,
And see and know his love in all.

“Oh,” thought Dora, who had paused at the door listening to the soft sweet strain, “how could I, blessed as I am with sight, and health, and every comfort, begin the new year with murmurs and tears, while a poor blind girl in her humble home can sing such a song as this?”

Dora tapped at the door, and entered. Betsy knew the sound of her step, and turned her face towards her with a smile of welcome.

“A happy New Year to you, Betsy!” cried Dora. “My mother has sent you a soft warm

shawl, and some nice little things from our table."

It was a pleasure to see the bright look on the face of the sightless girl, and to hear her half-whispered words,—“How good God has been to me!”

Dora shared the delight which she gave when she wrapped the warm shawl round the shoulders of Betsy, and, one by one, drew her treasures from the basket, and placed on the blind girl's knees, oranges, apples, plumcake, and a nice little packet of tea. Dora was perhaps as happy at that moment as she would have been in the chaise, had the day been warm, the road clear of snow, and she herself on the way to Mount Blane.

With the blessing of the poor upon her, Dora quitted the little lodge, and tripped away back to her home. She thought now of her own little sister, and reproached herself for unkindness to one who was sharing her disappointment, with a feverish cold besides.

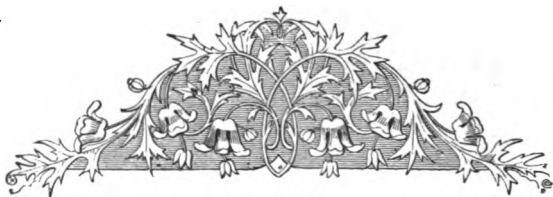
“I must try and make Mary happy, shut up as she is like a little prisoner in the house. She shall see my pictures, and play with my

toys, and we'll have a merry New Year's Day together notwithstanding the frost and the snow."

The redbreast had sung on the tree his cheerful song of content; the blind girl had sung in her darkness her song of meek submission; and now from the lips of Dora there rose a sweet song of praise !

Oh, dear children, who in happy homes now begin another year, with kind faces smiling around you, loving voices breathing good wishes, let your thanks for unnumbered blessings now arise to your Father in heaven ! Should disappointments come to you, as they come in turn to us all, let no murmur escape your lips. Remember the poor blind girl in her cottage, and the robin that sang in the snow !





XIV.

The Pic-Nic.

HAT a delightful morning for a ride!" exclaimed Mina, as she patted the pretty black pony which her brother Felix was about to saddle for her. "I almost wish that the place fixed on for the picnic were three times as far away, that I might have a longer gallop over the common, gay with golden furze, and along the green shady lanes."

"You forget," said Felix with a smile, "that if you have to ride, we have to walk; and that two miles each way is enough to give us an appetite for the chicken-pie and cold tongue which are stowed away in the basket."

"This is just the day for a pic-nic!" cried Mina; "I am sure that we shall enjoy ourselves much in the wood. There is only one

thing that may damp our pleasure," she added less gaily, "I almost wish that mamma had not invited Priscilla Grey; and yet it is unkind to say so,—it would have been hard on the poor girl to have left her behind."

"She's as ill-tempered a wasp as ever I met with!" cried Felix; "and it seems to me as if she had an especial spite against you, for no reason, that I can think of, except that our parents being richer than hers, you ride on Frisky while she has to go upon foot."

"I have never willingly done anything to vex her," said Mina.

"You would never vex any creature living!" exclaimed Felix, who was very fond of his sister. "But Priscilla is always on the look out for some cause of offence, and those who do so can always manage to find one! If you only heard how she was speaking of you the other day! it made me so angry, that if she had not been a girl, I think that I really should have struck her! She said—"

"I don't want to hear what she said, dear Felix," observed Mina, who was a peace-loving girl.

"But I've a bit of good news to give you.

Priscilla, after all, will not be at the pic-nic to-day. She slipped her foot yesterday, going down stairs, and has sprained her ankle,—not badly enough to lay her up, but enough to make it quite out of the question for her to walk four miles."

It must be owned that Mina's first feeling was one of relief, at being rid of the company of so disagreeable a girl. But at that moment the sun, which had been hiding behind a cloud, darted out his glorious beams, lighting up the landscape around, smiling on the weedy waste as well as the beautiful garden. Those rays brought to the mind of Mina part of a verse from the Bible, "*He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.*" Mina remembered what she should do as one of the children of him who bade us love our enemies, and do good to them that hate us.

"Felix," said the gentle girl, "if Priscilla cannot walk, she can ride."

"Of course, if she has anything to ride upon better than a dog or a cat!" laughed Felix.

"I could lend her my pretty Frisky, and walk with you to the wood."

Felix gave a loud whistle of surprise. "Lend her your pony, and lose your ride! how can you dream of doing such a thing!"

"Indeed, Felix, I feel that I must do it. As you have kindly saddled Frisky, we will go together—it is but a step—and lead him to the door of Priscilla."

"Well, you are wondrously kind," cried Felix. "I could understand your giving up your ride for a sister, or a friend, but to think of your doing so for the sake of such a girl as Priscilla!"

"It is not just for her sake," said Mina; and she thought to herself, it is for the sake of him who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

With a little difficulty Mina persuaded her brother to yield to her wishes, and they led the black pony to the door of the small house in which Priscilla lived with her mother. Priscilla, who was in worse temper than usual, from being disappointed of her expected treat, caught sight of them through the window.

"Ah, there's that girl Mina!" she exclaimed, with a burst of spiteful passion. "She's bringing that ugly beast that she is so proud

of, just to let me see how much better off she is than I am ! I wish that it would rain—I wish that a heavy thunderstorm would come, and spoil the fun of the pic-nic ! ”

But very different were Priscilla's feelings when Mina ran into the room, first inquired kindly after her ankle, and then offered to lend her Frisky that she might ride to the wood. Shame, and something like gratitude, mingled with pleasure and surprise, and Priscilla owned to herself what she never had owned before, that it was not only in worldly wealth that Mina was richer than she.

No rain fell, no thunderstorm came to spoil the pleasure of the pic-nic. There were few clouds in the sky, and none over the spirit of Mina. She enjoyed her walk—she enjoyed her feast—she enjoyed seeing and adding to the pleasure of all ; but her richest enjoyment came from the whisper of an approving conscience, that she had not been overcome of evil, but had overcome evil with good !





XV.

The King and his Men.



THE KING FREDERICK of Prussia took great pleasure in forming a regiment of the tallest and finest men that he could collect. A splendid body of troops they appeared, and the king was extremely proud of them.

One day, it is said, Frederick took with him the ambassadors from England, Austria, and France, to review this distinguished regiment.

"Do you think," said the monarch to the Austrian, "that your master, the Emperor, has in his army any men of whom an equal number could cope with this corps?"

"I frankly own that I do not think that his Majesty has," replied the courteous ambassador.

"What say you?" said the king to the Frenchman, repeating his former question to him. The minister bowed to the monarch, and returned much the same answer as the Austrian had done.

The pleased king then turned to the English ambassador. "I know, my Lord Hyndford," said he, "that your sovereign has many brave men in his army—but do you think that an equal number of them would be able to conquer my regiment?"

"I cannot be so bold as to say that," replied the Englishman, "but I will answer for it that *half the number would try.*"

Try! Yes, that little word works wonders—let each of my readers prove the power of it. The dull child sits with his task-book in his hand, glancing at the page which contains his lesson, without taking in the meaning of the words before him—wishing that the hour for study were over—sure that he shall never master his task. Ah! these tiresome columns are his regiment of tall Prussians—can he not conquer them? Let him *try!*

The child often reproved for his faults,

angry at once with himself and with others, begins to despair of amending. He has wished to subdue his temper, but it is violent still; to overcome his laziness—it still gains upon him: he is discouraged and sad, what can he do now? Can he never succeed in his efforts to please? Let him *try again*—yes, again and again; his faults are the regiment of Prussians before him, not *invincible*, however hard to be vanquished. If the young Christian soldier, with steady resolution, attempt to subdue them, armed with faith and prayer, he may not only *try* but *succeed*!





XVI.

The Boy and the Bird's Nest.

MARY, my love, all is ready; we must not be late for the train," said Mr. Miles, as, in his travelling dress, he entered the room where sat his pale, weeping wife, ready to start on the long, long journey, which would only end in India. The gentleman looked flushed and excited; it was a painful moment for him, for he had to part from his sister, and the one little boy whom he was leaving under her care. But Mr. Miles's chief anxiety was for his wife; for the trial, which was bitter to him, was almost heart-breaking to her. The carriage was at the door, all packed, the last band-box and shawl had been put in; Eddy could hear the sound of the horses pawing the ground in their impatience to start. But the clinging arms of

his mother were round him,—she held him close in her embrace, as if she would press him into her heart, and the ruddy cheeks of the boy were wet with her falling tears.

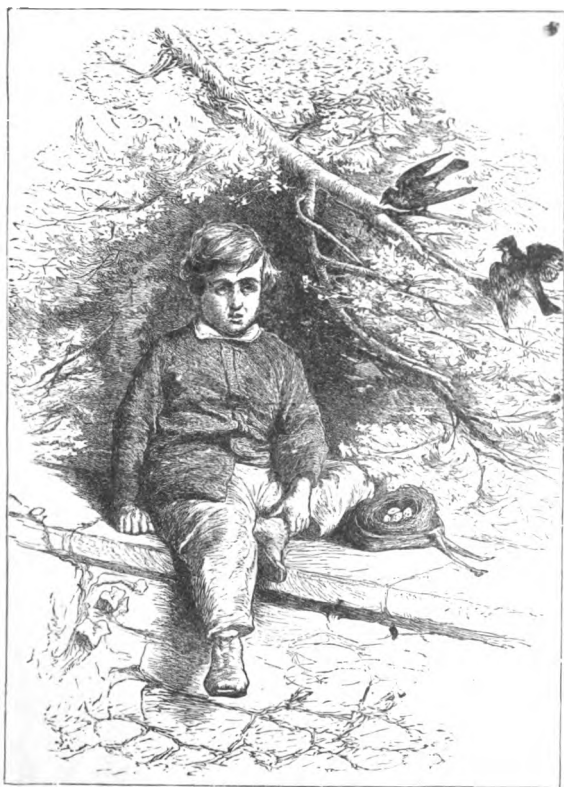
“O Eddy!—my child—God bless you!” she could hardly speak through her sobs.

“My love, we must not prolong this,” said the husband, gently trying to draw her away. “Good-bye, Lucy,—good-bye, my boy,—you shall hear from us both from Southampton.” The father embraced his sister and his son, and then hurried his wife to the door. Eddy rushed after them through the hall, on to the steps, and Mrs. Miles, before entering the carriage, turned again to take her only son into her fond arms once more.

Never could Eddy forget that embrace,—the fervent pressure of the lips, the heaving of his mother's bosom, the sound of his mother's sobs. Light-hearted boy as he was, Eddy never had realized what parting was till that time, though he had watched the preparations made for the voyage for weeks,—the packing of those big black boxes that had almost blocked up the hall. Now he felt in a dream as he stood on the steps, and through

the same time, the government has been
working to improve the quality of
education and to provide more
opportunities for students to study
abroad. The government has also
been working to improve the quality
of the workforce and to provide
more opportunities for workers to
improve their skills. The government
has also been working to improve
the quality of the environment and to
provide more opportunities for
citizens to participate in the
decision-making process.

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tear-dimmed eyes saw the carriage driven off which held those who loved him so dearly. He caught a glimpse of his mother bending forward to have a last look of her boy, before a turn in the road hid the carriage from view; and Eddy knew that long, long years must pass before he should see that sweet face again.

"Don't grieve so, dear Eddy," said Aunt Lucy, kindly laying her hand on his shoulder; "you and I must comfort each other."

But at that bitter moment Eddy was little disposed either to comfort any one or to receive comfort himself. His heart seemed rising into his throat; he could not utter a word. He rushed away into the woods behind the house, with a longing to be quite alone. He could scarcely think of anything but his mother; and the poor boy spent nearly an hour under a tree, recalling her looks, her parting words, and grieving over the recollection of how often his temper and his pride had given her sorrow. He felt, in the words of the touching lament,—

"And now I recollect with pain
How many times I grieved her sore;
Oh, if she would but come again,
I think I would do so no more!

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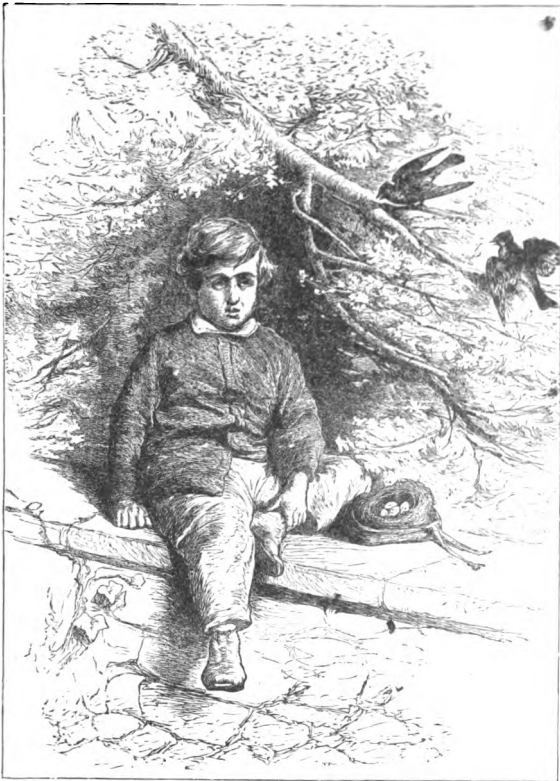
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"How I would watch her gentle eye!
'Twould be my joy to do her will,
And she should never have to sigh
Again for my behaving ill!"

But boys of eight years of age are seldom long unhappy. Before an hour had passed, Eddy's thoughts were turned from the parting by his chancing to glance upwards into the tree whose long green branches waved above him. Eddy espied there a pretty little nest, almost hidden by the foliage. Up jumped Eddy, eager for the prize; and in another minute he was climbing the tree like a squirrel. Soon he grasped and safely brought down the nest, in which he found to his joy three beautiful eggs!

"Ah! I'll take them home to—" Eddy stopped short; the word "mother" had been on his lips; it gave a pang to the boy to remember that the presence of his gentle mother no longer brightened that home,—that she already was far, far away. Eddy seated himself on a rough bench, and put down the nest by his side; he had less pleasure in his prize since he could not show it to her whom he loved.

While Eddy sat thinking of his parent, as

he had last seen her, with her eyes red and swollen with weeping, his attention was attracted by a loud, pitiful chirping, which sounded quite near. Though the voice was only the voice of a bird, it expressed such anxious distress, that Eddy instantly guessed that it came from the poor little mother whose nest he had carried away. Ah! what pains she had taken to form that delicate nest!—how often must her wing have been wearied as she flew to and fro on her labour of love! All her little home and all her fond hopes had been torn from her at once, to give a little amusement to a careless but not heartless boy.

No; Eddy was not heartless. He was too full of his own mother's sorrow when parting from her loved child to have no pity for the poor little bird, chirping and fluttering over the treasure which she had lost.

"How selfish I have been!—how cruel!" cried Eddy, jumping up from his seat. "Never fear, little bird! I will not break up your home; I will not rob you of your young. I never will give any mother the sorrow felt by my darling mamma."

Gently he took up the nest. It was no easy matter to climb the tree again with it in his hand; but Eddy never stopped until he had replaced the nest in its own snug place, wedged in the fork of a branch. Eddy's heart felt lighter when he clambered down again to his seat, and heard the joyful twitter of the little mother, perched on a branch of a tree.


And from that day it was Eddy's delight to take a daily ramble to that quiet part of the wood, and have a peep at the nest, half hidden in its bower of leaves. He knew when the small birds were hatched; he watched the happy mother when she fed her little brood; he looked on when she taught her nestlings to take their first airy flight. This gave him more enjoyment than the possession of fifty eggs could have done. Never did Eddy regret that he had showed mercy and kindness, and denied himself a pleasure to save another a pang.





XVII.

The two standard Measures.

AMMA, how tall was that great giant of whom papa was telling us?" said Harry, who, after standing with his back to the door, a pencil in one hand, and a ruler in the other, was busily engaged in examining some marks which he had made on the panel.

"He was nearly seven feet high, I believe," replied Mrs. Prince, without raising her eyes from her work.

"And how tall do you think that I am?" said the little boy, with a look of conscious pride.

"You? I should say about four feet, my dear."

"I am *eight* feet high!" cried Harry, with exultation.

"Impossible!"

"I have just measured myself, mamma."

"You must have measured wrong."

"Oh! I have been very careful: see, here is the mark for each foot up the door—one, two, four, six, eight."

"But what is your standard measure, Harry?" said his mother, with a smile.

"This pretty little ruler, *that I made for myself*," cried the child, exhibiting his paste-board measure, neatly marked with divisions for the inches, *but only half the proper length!* "You see, dear mamma, that I am taller than the giant!"

"Foolish child!" you say, and I should say so too, did I not fear that half the world act exactly as he did. We are all too apt to make our standard measures for ourselves, laying aside *the only true one*, which we find in the Bible; and thus we often deem ourselves sensible and good, when our wisdom is folly, our actions full of sin. The Bible tells us that *holiness* is absolutely necessary. "There is no need to be so very particular," cries the world. The Bible declares that we shall be judged for *every idle word*. "My words are my own!" says the trifler.


It is clear that there are *two standard measures* before us ; one short and easy, the other long and trying ; one that makes us seem like giants, the other like dwarfs. Thus we are too ready to choose the standard of *our own making*, and wilfully to deceive our own hearts. But, oh ! let us ask ourselves one solemn question—*by which standard shall we be measured at the last day ?*





XVIII.

A Peep into a Back-kitchen.

 **W**HAT can a little boy of seven years of age do?" I would ask of my young readers. Perhaps they will answer, "He can read, perhaps write in a very big round hand; he can bowl a hoop, toss a ball, spin a top, and fly a kite."

"But can such a child be of any *real use* in the world?"

Let me answer this question by giving a truthful account of a visit which I paid a few days ago to a family in one of the poorer streets of London.

My ring at the door of a lodging-house for the poor was answered by little Ben, a boy of about seven years of age. The sound of a baby's cry was heard from the back-kitchen, from which he had just come, and which was

the dwelling-place of the family. No wonder was it that the poor baby cried, for I found, on descending the pitch-dark staircase, that Ben was the sole nurse for the time of the sickly infant. That scene in the dark dull kitchen was a strange picture of life amongst the poor. There was Ben after he had followed me down stairs, hushing the baby in his little arms, and soon succeeding in quieting it, for he was evidently an experienced and skilful nurse. There were two other children under his care; Polly, about four years old, and Annie, not two. One might almost have said that Ben had *three* babies to look after, but I soon found that Polly was already to be reckoned as his little assistant. Annie began to cry; Polly went up to her sister, put her hands on either side of her face, and tried, as well as she could, to soothe her. Annie, however, cried still. Ben said a word or two to Polly, and the little nurse-maid, *four years of age*, hastened to get a cup, into which she poured water from a jar which stood on the ground, and she then brought the drink to her thirsty little sister. The boy had guessed the cause of the crying, and

Polly having thus removed it, we had again quietness in the back-kitchen.

Ben a very intelligent little fellow, entered freely into conversation with me, while he nursed the baby in his arms. That boy had been in sole charge of the three children for two hours, while his poor half-blind mother was out, procuring necessaries for the family.

"Are you happy?" I inquired. The question seemed a strange one to be asked in so gloomy an abode.

"Yes, I'm happy," replied the boy, with an honest smile on his face.

What a lesson for many a pampered, peevish child, grumbling and discontented in a comfortable home!

"Does Polly ever go out?" I inquired, for the low dark room looked something like a prison.

"Yes, I sometimes take her out."

"And does Annie go out?"

"Yes, when Polly goes, she goes; I take them in the *chay*."

This "*chay*" was twice mentioned by Ben. which rather surprised me, for I certainly did not suspect that the family kept a carriage.

My attention was, however, directed at last to a substantial-looking perambulator, which in the dim light I had not noticed before.

"Father made that," said Ben.

This was almost too much for me to believe. I questioned the boy closely, but he was sure of the fact. I found afterwards, from the mother's account, that the father had bought the wheels and other iron parts, the wreck of a former perambulator, for *ninepence*, as they were to be sold as old iron. He had actually made all the rest of the carriage for his little ones, stuffing the cushion with hay. It was a striking proof of the father's ingenuity, that labour of love! B—— must be a very industrious man. He goes to the docks in hope of getting a day's job there, and then, after his return, "cleans his potatoes," as little Ben told me; for when the labours of the day are over, B—— is glad to go out at night to sell baked potatoes, that he may thus help by double work to support his almost blind wife, and four little children.

"What do you get for breakfast, Ben?" I asked.

"Bread and butter,—no," said the child,

correcting himself, "Father gets bread and butter, I get bread and drippings. But *I like the drippings best*," he added, with a nice feeling which pleased me.

The poor mother soon came in half exhausted from wandering about for two hours, for in her blindness she could hardly find her way. She was, however, calm and contented. When I asked her what message she had for a lady who had sent her a present by me, "Tell her that I am in better circumstances," was the pale, thin woman's reply. As her husband had succeeded in getting four and a half days' work that week, Mrs. B—— seemed to feel that she had nothing to complain of. Her greatest trouble was the illness of her babe, as she feared that the little one might die. Very thin and wasted the poor infant looked, but the other three children appeared plump and well fed. Mrs. B—— must be an excellent manager, notwithstanding her blindness, and it is clear that her husband's earnings do not go to the ale-house. I have reason to hope that she is a God-fearing woman, and that she and her husband pray as well as labour. Ben is to attend the

Sunday-school. He would go to the week-day school also, which he used to enjoy attending, but so useful a child cannot be pared from his home.


I left that dark back-kitchen with a feeling rather of respect than of pity. Little Ben, brought up in the midst of poverty, with three young children to care for, and an almost blind mother to help, may lead a life of happiness, as he certainly does of usefulness, with hope before him, and love around, and the blessing of God upon him !





XIX.

Catching at a Shadow.

 "H, Alice dear, won't it be fine fun to drive into London and spend the day with grandmamma to-morrow," cried little Minnie Davis to her sister.

"I hope that you may find it so," was Alice's reply ; "as for me, I will not be with you."

"Not go to London !" exclaimed her brother Charlie, looking up in surprise from his book.

"No ; I hope to go somewhere farther than to London, and have better fun still. What say you to the Crystal Palace ?" asked Alice, with a beaming smile.

"You don't mean to say that the Brownes have asked you to drive down there in their carriage to-morrow ?" said Charlie eagerly.

"Well, no, not exactly *asked* me, but I

think that they will call for me on the way ; indeed I'm almost sure of it, for when Lizzie told me that they were all going, she smiled and squeezed my hand, just as much as to say, 'I hope you'll be one of the party.'"

"Oh, if you've nothing better to go upon than a smile and a squeeze of the hand," laughed Charlie, "I should advise you to come with us to grandmamma, and not give up a certain pleasure for one so very uncertain !"

"But I *have* something more to go upon," said Alice, who was not pleased at her brother's laugh ; "Mrs. Browne knows that I have never been to the Crystal Palace, and that I long above all things to see it, and a month ago she said to me, 'We must take you there with us some day.'"

Charlie smiled and shook his head. "Alice," said he, "don't you be like the dog in the fable, that when crossing a brook with a bone in his mouth, saw his own reflection in the stream, and was so eager to snatch at what he thought another bone in the jaws of another dog, that in the attempt to get it he dropt his own bone into the water."

Alice was a little out of humour at being

compared to so foolish a dog, and coldly replied, "If I choose to take my chance of a treat, I don't see that it matters to you."

"Oh, but Alice dear," said gentle little Minnie, "won't grandmamma be disappointed not to see you, and wouldn't papa like to have you with him, and wouldn't it be such a pleasure for us all to drive up together?" Minnie was a loving, coaxing little girl, and Alice was very fond of her; besides, there was reason in what she said, so that it was in a hesitating tone that her sister replied:

"I don't think—at least I hope that dear grandmamma won't much mind my staying away just this once; I daresay that I'll have another opportunity of seeing her before the winter sets in; you will take her my love, and tell her that nothing but a visit to the Crystal Palace"—("The *shadow* of a visit," interrupted Charlie)—"would prevent my enjoying the pleasure of going to her," continued Alice, without appearing to notice the interruption. "As for papa, I have his leave to remain behind if I wish it, and he has allowed me to go with the Brownes."

"That is to say if they wish to have you,"

laughed Charlie ; “ remember the dog and the bone, Alice, remember the dog ! ”

The morning came, sunshiny and bright : all breakfast-time the children were talking of the coming pleasures of the day. The chaise drove up to the door, Charlie and Minnie were eager to start for London, the only damp on their enjoyment being that their sister was not going with them.

“ Oh, Alice darling, do come ! ” pleaded Minnie ; “ we shall miss you so sadly, and so will grandmamma : we should all be so happy together ! ”

“ We’ll be happy together this evening, dear, when I tell you about all the wonderful things that I shall have seen—the stuffed beasts and the living birds, the huge tree, and the splendid Alhambra court. ”

“ Alice, my girl, I hope that we are to have you with us, ” said Mr. Davis, coming out of his room with his driving-whip in his hand.

“ Dear papa—if you don’t mind—I think I’d rather stop behind just this once. ”

“ Well, do as you please, ” said the father ; but Alice thought that she saw a little shade of displeasure on his face, and she felt much

inclined to run after him, and beg to be taken with him in the chaise.

"Alice is changing her mind !" cried Charlie. It was an unfortunate observation ; Alice was foolish enough to pride herself upon never changing her mind, even when she had made a mistake, and she did not choose that Charlie should be able to laugh at her for so doing. She therefore stayed within the gate of her father's pretty little garden at Hampstead, bade good-bye to the party, and saw them drive off towards London.

Alice could not help a feeling of misgiving as the chaise rattled away down the road, but she turned from the gate with the remark, "They will have a pleasant visit, I hope, but nothing to be compared to my treat. I will run and put on my best hat and my new kid gloves, and be all ready to start, for the Brownes are likely to set off at ten, and I wouldn't keep them waiting—no, not for one minute."

But if Alice would not keep the Brownes waiting, it was out of her power to prevent being kept waiting herself. Very impatient she grew as she watched by the gate, counting

up to a hundred again and again, to make time appear to pass less slowly.

"Dear me ! what can be delaying them so long ? What if they should not be going to the Crystal Palace after all—if I should have to stay here the whole day all alone, after disappointing Minnie, and running the risk of vexing dear kind grandmamma, who always gives such an affectionate welcome ! There's the sound of wheels—they're coming at last ! Oh, no, it is only the butcher's cart ! what a dust it stirs up ! And here comes the great lumbering omnibus." Alice drew back a little from the gate, to be out of the way of the dust. The omnibus was crowded with passengers within and without—it seemed to Alice as if all the world were going pleasuring except herself, and it was her own fault that she was not at that moment driving through London. Had she been less selfish and self-willed she would have given up for the sake of others her chance of the much-desired treat.

Scarcely had Alice returned to her post close behind the gate, when she uttered an exclamation of joy, clapped her hands, and could hardly refrain from jumping.

"Oh! here they are coming at last—I know the blue liveries and the spanking gray horses. There is Mrs. Browne's green bonnet, and there is Lizzie leaning out from the carriage; she sees me—she is smiling—she is kissing her hand—and—"

Poor Alice stopped short in the middle of her joyful sentence, for, alas! the carriage did *not* stop, the spanking grays did not slacken their pace as they dashed along the road in front of the gate! The smile of eager delight on the face of the poor child changed to a look of blank dismay when the carriage had actually passed, and no one had called to the coachman to pull up, and Lizzie and her party had actually disappeared from view, hastening on their way to the Crystal Palace!

When carriage, blue liveries, and all, could be no more seen, and even the rumble of the wheels could be heard no longer, Alice burst out crying, she could not help it, so bitter was her disappointment, so great her regret at her own folly. She ran into the house, threw herself down on a sofa, and sobbed. She had dropt the pleasure which she might have enjoyed, trying, like the dog, to snatch at another;

she had disregarded advice, she had acted a selfish as well as a foolish part, and now all her delightful hopes had ended in disappointment!

Alice cried violently, but she did not cry long; presently she lifted her head, dried her wet eyes, and began to try to bear her misfortune more bravely.

"This has been a sad lesson for me," said Alice to herself with a sigh. "I should not have minded the disappointment so much if it had been through no fault of my own. What a miserably dull day I shall spend! Papa and the children will not be back till the evening,—I have nothing to amuse me, or take up my thoughts. Oh, that I had gone up to London!"

But Alice was, after all, too sensible a child to give herself up for hours to vain regrets. "What can't be cured must be endured." She had made one mistake which could not be repaired, but to have remained all the day long in dull idleness, fretting over her disappointment, would have been to make another.

"I had better occupy myself about something," thought Alice, rising up from the sofa.

“Charlie’s garden wants weeding, it is half covered with groundsel and chickweed ; shall I give him a surprise by clearing it all nicely before he comes back ? Dear little Minnie has her stockings to mend, and I know that she finds darning so difficult ; shall I save her the trouble by doing the work myself ? Papa asked me yesterday to put his papers in order ; here is leisure time in which I can arrange everything as he likes. If I cannot be happy to-day, I may at least be useful : I’ll weed, I’ll work, I’ll sort the papers, and so pass the wearisome hours !”

Alice had this time made a wise resolution, and she found that while her little fingers were so busy, her mind had less time to dwell upon the sad disappointment of the morning. She had almost regained her cheerfulness at last, before she heard the sound of the returning chaise, and ran out to meet the party from London at the gate of the garden.

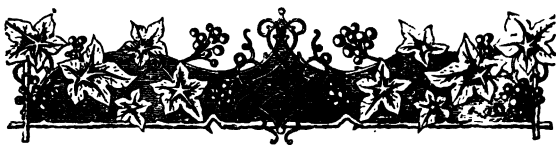
“Well, Alice, where have you been ?” cried Charlie, as he jumped down from the chaise.

“What have you seen ?” asked Minnie eagerly, as she followed her brother.

Alice tried to give a good-humoured smile

as she made reply—"When you go to your garden, Charlie, and you to your work-basket, Minnie, you will easily find out where I have *been*; and as for what I have *seen*, I have seen that it is best to be contented with pleasures within our reach, and that he was a foolish dog indeed that dropt his bone to catch at a shadow!"





XX.

Sending Horses to Travellers.



POOR old Matthew!" said Lucy, "I hear that he is almost dying with cold!"

Ben was amusing himself with spinning on the table four bright half-crowns, with which his grandfather had presented him that morning; but he stopped for a moment to listen to his sister's account of the sufferings of his aged neighbour, and in a tone of pity said, "I'm sure that I wish that he were better off, he is such a good old man!"

"He had nothing but a crust all yesterday," said Lucy.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Ben, balancing his coin between his finger and thumb; "I wish that he had had as good a dinner as I!" Twirl, twirl, went the half-crown, looking like

a half transparent ball, as it spun rapidly round ; then gradually its shape altered, it sank lower and lower, then rattled down to its old position on the table.

"I wish that some one would help him !" said Lucy, glancing at the money.

"So do I, with all my heart !" replied Ben, in a manner that told pretty clearly that his charity would not go beyond his good wishes.

There was a pause, which was first broken by Lucy. "I read such a funny account, in a book about Thibet," said she, "of a curious piece of superstition, that I put a mark in the place, just that I might read it to you ; I thought that it would make you laugh."

"Let's have it !" cried Ben, pocketing his half-crowns, for he dearly loved anything funny. So Lucy opened a volume of Huc's Travels, and read the following account of the strange ideas of a young student of medicine at Kounboun.—

"One day," writes the missionary Huc, "he proposed to us a service of devotion in favour of all the travellers throughout the whole world. 'We are not acquainted with

this devotion,' said we; 'will you explain it to us?' 'This is it: You know that a good many travellers find themselves from time to time on rugged toilsome roads, and it often happens that they cannot proceed by reason of their being altogether exhausted. In this case we aid them by sending horses to them.' 'That,' said we, 'is a most admirable custom; but you must consider that poor travellers such as we are not in a condition to share in the good work. You know that we possess only a horse and a little mule, which require rest in order that they may carry us to Thibet.' He clapped his hands together, and burst into a loud laugh. 'What are you laughing at? What we have said is the simple truth; we have only a horse and a little mule.' When his laughter at last subsided, 'It was not that which I was laughing at,' said he; 'I laughed at your mistaking the sort of devotion I mean. What we send to the travellers are paper horses.' And therewith he ran off to his cell, and presently returned, his hands filled with bits of paper, on each of which was printed the figure of a horse, saddled and bridled, and going at full

gallop. 'Here, these are the horses we send to the travellers? To-morrow we shall ascend a high mountain, and there we shall pass the day, saying prayers and sending off horses.' 'How do you send them to the travellers?' 'Oh! the means are very easy. After a certain form of prayer, we take a packet of horses, which we throw up into the air; the wind carries them away, and by the power of Buddha they are then changed to real horses, which offer themselves to travellers.'"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Ben, when she had finished; "I never heard anything so odd in my life. We have nothing in England like these paper horses!"

"Well, I could not quite say that," observed Lucy; "there was something that reminded me of them just now."

"What was that?" said Ben, glancing up at his sister.

"Sending only *good wishes* to those to whom we are able to send real help," Lucy replied with a smile. "They go just as far, and are exactly as useful to the poor, as the paper horses to the travellers in the deserts of Thibet!"



XXI.

Something wrong in the Boot.



AM sure that she means to slight me ; six days has she been in town, and yet has never come to see me !” exclaimed Sophia, bursting into passionate tears.

“She has doubtless been very busy,” quietly observed her mother. “Her brother is just departing for India ; she has so much to take up her thoughts and her time, that we may be satisfied that she has a great reason for not coming. I am sure that she does not intend to give offence.”

“I am certain that she does !” exclaimed Sophia, who had the unhappy art of making herself wretched by always expecting too much from others, and being on the look out for anything like a slight.

“You remind me of a story that I once

read," said her mother, "of a gentleman who lived in India, a place where scorpions so abound that they creep under furniture, and even hide in shoes, so that great care is required to avoid them."

Sophia dried up her tears, and turned to listen, for like most young people whom I know, she delighted in anything like a story.

"One day," continued her mother, "the gentleman of whom I speak, probably intending to take a ride, began to put on a pair of boots. What was his alarm when, on thrusting his foot into one, he felt a sharp sting-like pang."

"Was it a scorpion?" exclaimed Sophia.

"The same thought flashed across the gentleman's mind. 'I am stung!' thus he reflected, 'I shall perhaps die from the injury, but at least I will kill the venomous creature, whatever pain it may cost me.' So he stamped down his foot, with mingled anger and fear, was more hurt than before, but the greater his pain the harder he crushed down the thing which caused it."

"It must be dead at last!" cried the gentleman, much excited, as he drew his poor foot out at length. "I should like to see the reptile!" so lifting up his boot, he shook it violently to throw out what was in it, and out tumbled——"

"Oh, mamma! what was there?" cried Sophia.

"Out tumbled a *shoe-brush*, my dear."

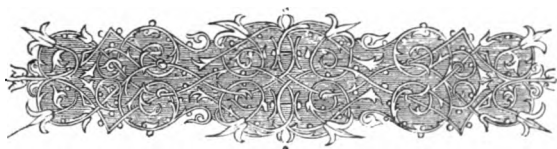
"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Sophia, bursting out laughing; "so he had been stamping on the bristles all the time, and hurting himself dreadfully all for nothing!"

"He had been taking an innocent shoe-brush for a venomous reptile, my love, when a little examination would have shown him, and some other people besides, that we may inflict upon ourselves much causeless pain, by always fancying the worst, and being on the look out for scorpions!"

The gentle lecture of the mother was here interrupted by the entrance of Sophia's long expected friend; and when the little girl found what good cause had kept that friend away from her for so long, and how foolish and unjust her own suspicions had been, she turned

with an arch smile towards her mother, and whispered, "Ah, mamma, I now see what you meant! I have been stamping on the shoe-brush in the boot."





XXII.

The Olive-Branch.



F you are going for the fodder for our cow, Carlo, what say you to taking our little Rosina with you? It is long since she has been beyond our village, and a ride upon our trusty old Duchessa will do her good."

It was Bice, the wife of an Italian peasant, who spoke these words to her husband, as she stood at her cottage door, with her bright little girl at her side.

"What say you, Rosina?" asked the smiling father; "have you a mind for a ride?"

The little girl clapped her hands for joy. "Oh, if we are going to the farmer's for the fodder," she cried, "then we will pass by Aunt Barbara's cottage. May I go in and see her, father, and carry her one of mother's little goat-milk cheeses that she always likes so much?"

Rosina saw with surprise a shade of sadness gathering upon her father's sunburnt face ; and when she turned to look at her mother, Bice was brushing a tear from her eye.

" You cannot go to your aunt, Rosina," said Carlo ; and his voice sounded almost stern to his child.

" Is poor aunt ill ?" asked the little girl ; for she saw that her mother was greatly distressed.

" Ask no questions, my child," said Carlo. Then, turning to his wife, he went on : " She cannot understand, poor lamb, why a woman should quarrel with an only sister, who never meant to give her cause of offence."

Rosina heard her father's words with increasing wonder. She knew that her Aunt Barbara had a peevish and angry temper ; but she could not think how she, or any one else, could possibly quarrel with that gentle mother who had always taught Rosina to love and forgive. The child did not, however, venture to ask any more questions, though her heart was sad at the idea that any one could by unkindness bring a tear to her mother's eye.

" Perhaps, after all, Carlo," said Bice, looking up earnestly into the face of her husband,

"it might be as well for you to let our little one run in and see her aunt, as you are passing her very door. Barbara has always been kind to Rosina; it might"—Bice's voice dropped to a whisper as she added, "It might do good—it could scarcely do harm."

"It would look like an attempt to make up with her," said Carlo, rather proudly; "and after her insolent conduct to you, I would not choose to take the first step."

"I would take not the first step only, but go the whole way, if I could but win back my sister to love me," said Bice, clasping her hands. "O Carlo, *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God!'*"

"I never knew any one more ready to forget and forgive than you are, Bice," said her husband; "it is all the greater shame to Barbara that she quarrels with such a sister. But she is a woman who would snap at any one who chanced to stand in her light. However, as you wish it, our little Rosina shall run in and wish her aunt good-day; a child should never be mixed up with the disputes of older people."

"And may I carry aunt one of your nice cheeses?" whispered Rosina, standing on tip-toe, and drawing down her mother towards her, that she might breathe the words in her ear.

"Alas! Rosina, my darling, she would now accept nothing from me!"

"Not even a *kiss*?" whispered Rosina.

The mother's heart was too full for reply; for, notwithstanding Barbara's unkindness, she was dear to her only sister. Bice could only lift her darling up in her arms, and half cover her rosy face with kisses.

"Half of these are for your own little girl, half are for auntie," said simple Rosina; and she resolved to be a trusty messenger, and deliver faithfully what she considered to be tokens of love and forgiveness.

Carlo started on his way to the farm, leading the patient and trusty Duchessa, while Fidele, the dog, ran by his side. The day was warm and bright; sunshine lay on the valley and gilded the distant hills; but Rosina sat on her ass more quiet and silent than usual—she had scarcely a word even for her old friend Fidele. Carlo might have missed her merry prattle had not his own thoughts

been painfully occupied with the family quarrel. He little guessed what was passing through the mind of the child scarcely four years of age.

Barbara, it is true, had hitherto been always kind to Rosina ; the child had seen her angry with others, but had never had a harsh word herself. Yet Barbara's temper was such that Rosina's love for her had always been mixed with some fear. What the child had just heard and seen had increased that feeling of fear to a painful degree. Rosina quite dreaded having to go alone into the presence of her aunt, the stern black-eyed woman, whose unkindness had made even her mother cry. Rosina would far rather have quietly passed the door on her ass ; and she knew that a word to her father would be enough to make him spare her what she now felt to be a very great trial of courage. But then her mother's tears and her mother's kisses ! Rosina could not forget these, and she ought to deliver them. Besides, her mother had said such beautiful words from Scripture ; oh, if Aunt Barbara could but have heard them, surely she would become a peace-maker too, and never be angry or cross any more !

So, while the ass went on at her slow, steady pace, little Rosina was repeating to herself over and over again, "*Blessed are the peace-makers.*" Her young heart beat faster as Duchess stopped, as she often had done before, at the vine-covered porch of Barbara's door, over which hung clusters of ripe dark grapes. Rosina felt almost inclined to cling to her father's arm, and beg him to drive on Duchess, for she dared not go in by herself; but even one as young as Rosina may be guided by conscience, and conscience was whispering to the child that her mother wished her to go, that it was right to go, and that the great God of peace could put kind thoughts into the heart of her aunt.

Barbara was sitting alone in a darkened room: it was dark because she had made it so; she had so choked up her window with thick-growing plants that the light which shone so brightly outside could hardly creep in through the leaves. And so poor Barbara was shutting out the sunshine of love from her home and her heart, and making them both dull and cheerless when they might have been so bright. Do you think that the proud,

quarrelsome woman was happy? Ah, no, dear reader; for there never is true happiness with sin. It has been truly said that a little sin disturbs our peace more than a great deal of sorrow. Barbara was in her secret soul vexed at having quarrelled with her sister; she was vexed, but she would not own it, for her heart was full of pride. Barbara had resolved never to confess herself wrong, and rather to live all her life unloving and unloved than to bend her haughty spirit to make friends with her younger sister.

There sat unhappy Barbara, with no companion but bitter thoughts. She felt terribly alone in the world; but it was her own pride and temper that had made a desert around her. She could not help thinking of the happy days of childhood, when she and her sister had been merry playmates together. Barbara's eyes chanced to rest on a little olive-plant in her window; and the sight of that plant had brought back to her memory days of old. She recollected how Bice, then a rosy-cheeked child, had once asked her what shrub or tree she would choose for her own especial favourite.

"I would choose the laurel," had been Bar-

bara's proud reply ; " for that is the plant of which wreaths are made for those who conquer in war."

" I would choose the olive," little Bice had said ; " for it was the leaf of the olive that was brought by the dove to Noah ; and it always seems as if the plant, with its juicy fruit and silvery hue, made one think of gentle peace."

So from that day the olive had always been connected in the mind of Barbara with the thought of her gentle sister.

" I'll throw that plant away ; I'll pull it up," muttered Barbara ; " I don't care to keep anything now to remind me of her."

The proud woman had hardly uttered the words when a soft, a very soft knock was heard at the door. At Barbara's rough " Come in," the door slowly opened, and a little child appeared, so like to what Bice had been at her age, that Barbara could almost fancy that she was looking again at her earliest playmate. Rosina crept in timidly at first, for she thought that her aunt looked terribly stern.

" Why do you come here ?" asked Barbara, with a little softening, however, in her tone.

"I have something to give you from mother," said the child.

"I will take nothing from her," replied Barbara; "I'll return it, whatever it be."

"Will you?" cried Rosina, suddenly running up to her aunt, and opening wide her little arms. The next moment the arms were clasped tightly round Barbara's neck, and the soft little lips were printing kisses on her cheek.

Barbara was a proud, ill-tempered woman; but she still had a heart, and a heart that might be conquered by love. She would have spurned a gift, but she could not refuse a kiss. Barbara could not help pressing her sister's child to her bosom, and a strange choking sensation appeared to rise in her throat.

"Those are mother's kisses—dear mother's kisses—and you promised to return whatever she sent," cried Rosina. "Give me the kisses back for my mother!"

And if Barbara did give the kisses, and if her proud eyes were moist as she did so, who can wonder? She would have mocked at words of reproach; she would have retorted insult or scorn; but the kiss, the fond kiss,

sent through the little child, subdued both her anger and pride.

Barbara rose from her seat, and slowly walked to the window ; perhaps it was partly to hide her eyes that she did so. She broke off a large branch from the olive, and suddenly turning round, held it out to her little niece.

"Take this to your mother from me, Rosina," she said, "and tell her to remember our early choice. The laurel, I have found, bears but a poisonous berry ; the fruit of the olive is good—I will cultivate it from this day."

If Rosina did not fully understand the message, she understood the smile which followed it, which looked so pleasant on a face so lately furrowed with gloomy frowns. And when Rosina, bearing the olive-branch in her little hand, ran out to her father, and told him all that had passed, his look of amusement and pleasure more than rewarded the child for the effort she had made.

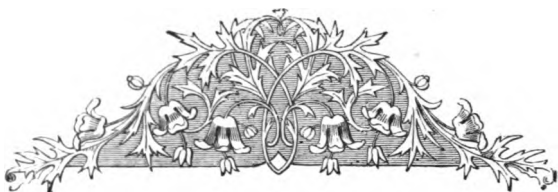
"Brava, my brave little messenger!" exclaimed Carlo, giving Rosina a hearty kiss as he lifted her up to Duchessa's back. "Brava, little peace-maker ! So you made her give back the kisses again. That bit of olive will

bring as much joy to your mother's heart as if it were made of silver, with blossoms of pearl and leaves of gold."

Very joyful was the return of Rosina to her home. The fodder which Carlo procured from the farm, and heaped high on the patient Duchessa, looked like a little throne for the child, who, as she saw her mother standing at her door to welcome her, merrily waved her branch of olive, the token of joy and success.

Carlo planted the olive-twigg in his garden, where it took root, and in time grew up to be a goodly tree with blossoms and fruit. Barbara, who was often a guest at her sister's cottage, watched the growth of the olive with peculiar interest; and Rosina always on her aunt's birth-day bore to her a little spray from the tree. And when Rosina herself had grown up to be a woman, and married, and had little children of her own, their favourite spot for play was under the shadow of what was called "the peace-maker's tree."

Dear children, plant in the gardens of your own little hearts the olive-branch of peace.



XXIII.

Try Again.



"T'S no use trying, I'll give it all up!" exclaimed Neddy with a burst of sorrow, as he looked down on the torn kite which he had trampled on when in a passion, because he could not release himself from the long tail which had become entangled round his leg. "Here I've been trying every day, all this week long, from Monday to Saturday, to keep my temper for one whole day, to gain the book which papa offered to me as a prize, and every day I've broken all my good resolutions and gone into a pet about one thing or other! I'll give up trying altogether!"

"And would that be a wise thing for my little boy to do?" said his mother, Mrs. Stace, gently drawing her child towards her.

"Just look at my kite!" sobbed Neddy.

"Perhaps matters may be mended here," said Mrs. Stace, gently disengaging the tangled string from the leg of the boy; "and as for the poor torn kite, we'll see what a little paste and paper will do to mend that big hole."

"They can't mend my horrible temper!" cried Neddy, who was sadly disheartened at his failure.

Now, perhaps, my readers will wonder at the mother dealing so gently with such a passionate child, instead of punishing or reproving. But Mrs. Stace knew that poor Neddy had an excuse for his temper that most little children have not, for it was a sad and painful illness that had helped to make him so fretful. Besides, she knew that Neddy grieved over his temper, and was very anxious indeed to become more patient and good; so instead of being angry with him, she sought to give him encouragement and help in his struggle with the sin which beset him.

"I'll give up trying to be patient," sighed Neddy. "I'm sure that I'll never be a good-tempered boy."

"Did you ever hear the story of the brave King Robert Bruce and the spider?" asked



BRUCE AND THE SPIDER.

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Mrs. Stace, opening a book which contained a beautiful print of a warrior stretched on the ground in a cave, watching a spider making its web.

Neddy was very fond of pictures, and still more fond of stories, so that the change in the conversation made him forget his trouble for a while, and he asked his mother to tell him what that man had to do with the spider.

"Robert Bruce," said Mrs. Stace, "was, perhaps, the most famous king that ever reigned in Scotland,—but he had a hard struggle at first with difficulties and misfortunes. He had false friends and powerful foes; enemies wasted his land, and he found himself a fugitive in a dreary cave in the Isle of Arran. Bruce felt, like you, my Neddy, inclined to give up a hopeless struggle. Why should he fight any more for his country? six times he had made an effort to free her from England's hated power, and six times had found such effort vain."

"I think that he might well give up trying, mamma."

"While Bruce," continued the lady, "was turning over these sad thoughts in his mind,

it is said that his eye chanced to rest on a spider attempting to fix her thread on some part of the rocky wall. The insect had a difficult task to perform; she tried again and again without success, but would not give up in despair. Bruce counted that the little spider had *six times* attempted to fix her thread—just as many times as he had vainly tried to give freedom to his dear land.”

“And just as many times as I have been days trying to fix my good resolutions, and conquer my naughty temper,” said Neddy.

“Bruce, as the story goes, thought to himself, ‘I will watch whether the spider will try a *seventh* time, and if she does try and succeed, I’ll once more draw this sword for Scotland, and try if success may not be mine at last.’”

“Oh, mamma, did the patient little spider make another attempt?”

“She did, it is said, and succeeded; and Robert Bruce felt his own hope and resolution return. He went back to the scene of conflict, he vanquished his foes, he won his crown, and had reason to the end of his days to be thankful that he, a warrior and king,

had not scorned to take a lesson from a spider!"

"I think," said little Neddy, looking up with a smile on his sickly face, "that you want *me* to take a lesson both from a spider and a king."

"You have your difficulties to overcome, my boy, as they both had theirs, though of such a very different kind; you need the patience they needed, you must make repeated efforts as they made, and never give up in despair. But oh, my son," continued the lady, drawing her boy closer to her heart, "you must never forget that both patience and success are gifts of God, and must be asked for in prayer. Hitherto you have made resolutions in your own strength, and, alas! they have broken like threads. Now and henceforth seek strength from the Lord; it is he, and he alone, who can make us *more than conquerors* in the life-long battle with sin."

Neddy did not forget when kneeling that night by his little cot, to confess his folly and passion, and to ask for help to fight in future against them. The following day was Sunday, and Neddy awoke with good resolutions,

which again he strengthened by prayer. All through that Sunday the little boy kept a constant watch over his lips, and a guard against his temper; and when his cousin spoke rude and teasing words, walked away to the window, and would not trust himself to reply.


A happy boy was Neddy when on that Sunday evening his father called him to him, and placed the prize in his hand; and his mother whispered to him the holy words which had been the text of the clergyman's sermon, "*Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*"





XXIV.

It's very Hard.



"T'S very hard to have nothing to eat but porridge, when others have every sort of dainty," muttered Charlie, as he sat with his wooden bowl before him. "It's very hard to have to get up so early on these bitter cold mornings, and work hard all day, when others can enjoy themselves without an hour of labour! It's very hard to have to trudge along through the snow, while others roll about in their coaches."

"It's a great blessing," said his grandmother, as she sat at her knitting—"it's a great blessing to have food, when so many are hungry; to have a roof over one's head, when so many are homeless; it's a great blessing to have sight, and hearing, and strength for daily

labour, when so many are blind, deaf, or suffering."

"Why, grandmother, you seem to think that nothing is hard," said the boy, still in a grumbling tone.

"No, Charlie, there is one thing that I think very hard."

"What's that?" cried Charlie, who thought that at last his grandmother had found some cause for complaint.

"Why, boy, I think *that heart is very hard* that is not thankful for so many blessings."





XXV.

Robin's Ride.

WHAT a grand day I shall have ! How I've been looking forward to it for the last month ! " exclaimed young Robin Alleyne. " Ah ! here comes Brownie at last," he added, as a shaggy little Shetland pony, led by an ostler from a neighbouring inn, came up at a gentle trot to the gate where Robin was impatiently awaiting him. " You're a little late in bringing him, John—it is more than half-past ten ; but Brownie is a good little pony, and will soon make up for lost time."

With these words on his lips, Robin lightly sprang into the saddle, and took the rein from the ostler. " Here we go—off, off, and away !" and a shake of the bridle sent the brave little pony off at a canter, without his needing a touch of the whip.

The day was wintry, the sky cloudy, snow lay on the ground, but the merry boy heeded not the weather. He was going to spend the day at his uncle's house, with a cheerful party of young cousins and friends. There was to be a foot-race on the lawn, with plenty of hurdles to jump over, and a silver-tipped bugle as a prize. Robin had been practising running and jumping to prepare for this race. When the snow kept him in-doors, he would run round his father's dining-room, leaping over the chairs, and even trying to clear the table at a bound—an attempt which had cost him a tumble. But little cared Robin for a tumble; little cared he for knock or for bruise; he was a manly boy, active, merry, and bold, with a heart as light as a feather.

“The race is to be at eleven, so make good speed, little Brownie!” cried the young rider to the pony, which his father had hired for the day, that it might bear him to Mayblossom Lodge. One of the greatest treats that could be given to Robin was a ride upon Brownie. The boy would often have been tempted to wish that the pony were quite his own, had not Robin been taught not to covet, but to be

contented and thankful for the things which he had, without longing for what he had not.

It was not easy for Brownie to canter on as fast as his young rider would have liked, for the snow lay thick, and he often sank in it up to his shaggy fetlocks. Robin had ridden about half the distance to Mayblossom Lodge, when, at a turn of the road, he passed a lonely cottage in which dwelt a poor old couple of the name of Browne. Robin had often seen the old man weeding in his little garden ; or his wife, who took in washing, hanging out clothes to dry ; but he had never spoken to either of them, and scarcely knew them by name.

Just as Robin had cantered past the cottage, the shrill sound of a woman's voice calling out loudly after him, made the young rider draw the rein. Turning round on his saddle, he saw Mrs. Browne come running out into her garden, without bonnet or shawl, with a look of fear and distress on her face, which showed Robin at once that something serious must be the matter.

" Oh, young master ! " she cried in a tone of entreaty, " will you, for mercy's sake, ride

off to Barnes for the doctor? my poor old man's taken with a fit, and there's not a soul near that can go!"

"To Barnes!" cried Robin Alleyne; "why, that is nearly five miles away!"

"Your pony can carry you; I could not leave my husband. Oh, young master, he's ill, very ill!"

Robin Alleyne could not help wishing that the illness had happened on any day rather than on this. Barnes lay in quite a different direction from Mayblossom Lodge; every one would be expecting him at his uncle's, and oh, how impatient he was to be there! Old Browne was no relation or friend of his own;—why should he be the one to be sent for the doctor? So whispered selfishness for a moment—but only a moment. There came to the memory of the boy the beautiful story from the Scripture of a traveller who would not go on to pursue his own business or pleasure, and leave a poor stranger to suffer and die. Robin thought of the sacred command, "*Go and do thou likewise*," and he did not hesitate long.

"Go back to your husband," he said; "I

know where the doctor lives, and I'll soon let him hear of your trouble ;" and turning his pony's head, Robin Alleyne cantered off in the very opposite direction from that which his own wishes would have led him to take, passing his father's house, which he had quitted so gaily not a quarter of an hour before.

Very long seemed the ride to Barnes; very hard was it for Brownie to make his way through the snow. The pony and his rider were now facing the chill north wind, and it seemed to pierce Robin through like a dart of ice. Then down came some large white flakes from the dull-looking sky; faster and faster they fell, till the air was darkened by the heavy snow-storm. It seemed to poor Robin Alleyne as if he would never reach the doctor's door; and he thought with a little regret on all the pleasure that he was losing, and how by this time all chance was gone of his winning the silver-tipped bugle.

At last Robin came in sight of the ugly red brick house with green palings, which had the doctor's name on a brass plate on the door. Up to it trotted Brownie, panting and puffing, the steam rising from his shaggy hide; and

Robin, whose fingers were stiff with cold, pulled the bell with such hearty good-will that its loud summons soon brought the servant running in haste.

"Tell your master, please," cried the boy, "that poor old Browne, who lives in the lonely cottage by Twygate pond, is taken with a fit, and is dreadfully ill, and ask him to go and see him as fast as ever he can."

"Master's just going out—here comes the gig for him," answered the servant; "I'll give him your message directly."

"Oh, how glad I am that I did not delay," thought Robin Alleyne as he turned his pony. "If I had been but five minutes later, the doctor might have gone out for the day. But there's the church clock striking half-past eleven; the race must be over now. Well, though I've lost my chance of the prize, I'll never regret that I've done a kindness to those poor old people."

Robin was too kind a boy to flog the pony, which was growing tired from the heaviness of the road; it was therefore almost one o'clock before he reached the gate of Mayblossom Lodge.

"I'll not tell what has made me so late," thought the boy; "my father's proverb is, 'Do what is right, and say nothing about it;' and we are told in the Bible not to seek for the praise of men."

Right glad was Robin to give Brownie in charge to his uncle's servant, and, after shaking the snow from his dress, to run into the warm house, and up to the room from which came the sound of merry young voices.

"Oh! here is Robin!—here he comes at last!" shouted half a dozen children, as Robin, with his cheeks red as apples from the cold, suddenly made his appearance.

"Why, what has kept you so late? you're two hours behind time," cried one.

"We thought that you were lost in the snow," said another.

"What delayed you?" asked Jessy, his cousin.

"Never mind what delayed me, as I've come at last," said Robin, rubbing his chilled hands by the roaring fire.

"I know what kept him," laughed a boy who was fond of a joke; "he ate so much plumcake last night that he could not get up in the morning."

"Or he was afraid to let Brownie go faster than a walk, lest he should be pitched over the pony's head!" cried another saucy little rogue.

"You may guess what you please," said Robin, good-humouredly; "now tell me who won the foot-race."

"Oh, the snow came on, so we put off the race," said his uncle. "But the sun is beginning to shine, so we'll have the race after dinner."

"Then I'm not too late, after all," thought Robin; "it was a good thing for me that the snow-storm came on, though I thought it a trouble at the time."

Just then the dinner was announced; and who amongst the party enjoyed the roast beef and plum-pudding like Robin, who had won a good appetite by his long ride, and who was, besides, happy in the consciousness that he had performed a kind action!

About an hour after dinner the race came off. Robin ran in the race, and ran well; he sprang over the hurdles, one after another, like a bounding deer, and he was the first at the goal! Blithe and merry was Robin when

he rode home at dusk, with his silver-tipped bugle hung round his neck.

Robin was glad, when he called at Browne's cottage on the following day, to find that the doctor had driven to it directly, and that the poor old man was likely to recover from his illness. Sweet to the boy were the thanks and blessings of the grateful wife. Robin said nothing to any one at his home of his adventure. He little guessed that his father had heard the whole story from the doctor, and that he had thanked God, when at his evening prayers, for having blessed him with a son who would quietly do his duty, and seek for no reward but the approval of his Heavenly Master.

On New Year's Day Robin chanced to be looking out of the window, when he saw John the ostler leading Brownie up to the gate.

"Oh, papa!" cried Robin to his father, who was sitting beside him, "why is dear old Brownie brought here to-day?"

"Can you not guess?" said Mr. Alleyne.

"I suppose that you are going to treat me to another ride, dear papa. You are so kind to hire Brownie for me."

"Brownie cannot be hired any more, for a gentleman has bought him," said Mr. Alleyne.

The face of poor Robin fell. "I can't help being sorry for that," he exclaimed, "for I never can ride him again."

"Do not be sure of that till you hear the name of his new master," said Mr. Alleyne with a smile. "The pony is now the property of one who has shown that he knows how to use him on errands of kindness." The father laid his hand fondly on the shoulder of Robin as he added, "Brownie belongs to a boy who gave up his own pleasure that he might bring a doctor to a suffering fellow-creature—the pony is a father's gift to the son who has learned to do what is right, and say nothing about it!"





XXVI.

I wish I were Rich.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it."—LUKE viii. 6.



"I SHOULD like to be rich, very rich!" cried Louisa; "I should like to be as rich as the Queen!"

"Perhaps riches would neither make you better nor happier," quietly observed her uncle, who was busy at his employment as a watchmaker beside her.

"But they would, uncle; I am quite certain that they would."

"You forget the words that we read last night from the Bible, '*They that will be rich fall into a snare.*'"

"I cannot see how that should be."

"The pleasures and cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, are apt to draw our

hearts from God. In the parable, they are described as the thorns which spring up and choke the good seed. We are too much inclined to forget the Giver while enjoying his gifts: this is not the case with all, but it is the case with many."

"I would never forget the Lord, because he loaded me with comforts," replied Louisa. "The more I received, the more grateful I would feel. How much good I would do; how many I would make happy! I would build a church one year, and a school-house another;—and—why, there—can it be!—yes,—there is mother herself coming along the lane! Oh, I never thought that she would be back from London till Monday!" and, with a cry of delight, the little girl sprang to the door, to meet and to welcome her mother.

The fond parent had hurried back from London, whither she had been obliged to go upon business. There had been much for her to see,—much to enjoy: friends had urged her to stay, she was weary and needed rest, but the thought of her darling whom she had left at home, drew her, like a magnet, back to Berk-

shire. She had never before been separated from Louisa, and her dear child had scarcely ever been absent from her thoughts. All that the tender mother saw that was wonderful or beautiful, was stored up in her memory to amuse her daughter. In the gay shops, nothing had tempted the kind parent so much as what she thought might give pleasure to her child. And now she felt the dear arms clasped round her neck, she could press her little one close to her heart ;—it was enough for her to see her darling,—and she thought of nothing else till Louisa eagerly cried, “and what have you brought me from London, dear mother ?”

When the large travelling bag was produced and opened, a number of books, a packet of clothes, and a few other things were hastily pulled out by Louisa, impatient to find something more interesting to herself. It must have been a weary business to have carried that great bag from the station, three miles distant ! Louisa’s search was soon successful. With repeated exclamations of delight she drew forth a little Dutch doll, with its gay gilt ear-rings ; a lemon, enclosing a nest of others, box within box ; a book full of pictures ;

and two shining fish, with a magnet to attract them when floating in water.

"Oh, how beautiful, how charming!" cried Louisa, turning from one thing to another, while her weary mother stood patiently looking on. "Another lemon! I think these funny little boxes never will end;—and oh, I must fetch water for my fish to swim in. Look, uncle, look! they will turn any way;—just see, I am sure that it will please you!"

"I do see something, Louisa, that does *not* please me. I see a mother knocked up with a long journey and the heat;—no one has even helped her off with her cloak,—no one has set her chair in its place. A cup of tea would refresh her,—no kettle is on the fire: her child has scarcely a word or a look to give her!"

"Oh, mamma, mamma," said Louisa, colouring at the reproof; "I was wrong, very wrong; but the truth is, that I was so much taken up,—so much engaged with"—

"The gifts, that the giver was forgotten!" interrupted her uncle, gravely. "This is the case with but too many in this world,—

children of a larger growth, playing with grander toys. We should know ourselves well before we dare to affirm that there would be no danger to hearts such as ours in *the pleasures of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.*"





XXVII.

Trusted and Trusty; or, The
Ship on Fire.



“**VER** the side with ye, boy, quick ; one minute’s delay may cost your life !” exclaimed Mr. Gray to a fellow-passenger, a lad of about fourteen, who appeared to hesitate about swinging himself down by a rope into a boat which rocked in the waves below the burning ship. The flames were raging round mast and yard, the sails caught fire, blazed and shrivelled, thick volumes of black smoke hung like a funeral pall over the vessel, and the awful red glare was reflected on the sea, which glowed like a fiery furnace. It was no time for delay indeed, and yet Reginald drew back from the vessel’s side. “I had forgotten it,” he exclaimed, and darted back towards the cabin.

"Madness—he is lost!" muttered Mr. Gray; "no money was worth such a risk. That young life is thrown away."

Sailors and passengers with eager haste lowered themselves into the boats, but there was not room for all. Some, under the directions of the captain, whose brave spirit only rose with the danger, hastily lashed spars together to form a rude raft for the rest. Mr. Gray laboured among these, gasping and almost fainting as he was from the heat, which had become well-nigh intolerable. Often he glanced anxiously towards the hatchway, with a faint hope of seeing young Reginald emerge again from the burning cabin into which he had so daringly ventured.

The raft, the last hope of the crew, is floating on the crimsoned billows, the crowded boats have sheered off; Mr. Gray, half-blinded and suffocated by the heat and smoke, springs down on the raft, he is followed by the captain and all who remained of the passengers and crew, except the poor orphan boy. They must push off in all speed from the vessel, lest some burning spar fall on them and crush them. Just as they are about to do so—

"Hold! hold!" cries Mr. Gray, starting up from his place, as a slight form, blackened with smoke, and with dress singed and burnt, appears on the deck; he springs over the bulwarks, misses the raft, and the next moment is dragged out of the billows to lie gasping and exhausted, with his head on the knee of Mr. Gray.

"Thank God, my poor boy, you are saved!"

"Thank God," faintly echoed Reginald Clare.

A strange appearance was presented by the lad. His hair and eyebrows were singed, marks of burning were on his face and his hands, his dress hung in tatters around him, but he held in his grasp a flat parcel wrapt up in oilcloth, and a faint smile rose to his lips as he murmured, "I'm so glad that I have it all safe!"

That was no time for questionings. It was with the utmost difficulty that those upon the raft managed to push it far enough away from the blazing vessel to avoid destruction. Their situation was one of extreme danger. A ship which had happily been sufficiently near to be attracted by the sight of the flames, and which had picked up those who had escaped

in the boats, had passed on without an attempt to save the sufferers floating on the raft. It was not till the vessel had burnt down to the water's edge, and the flames had sunk at last from having nothing further on which to vent their fury, that the captain dared to raise a boat-sail which he had had the foresight to carry with him. By means of this he succeeded, after long hours of painful anxiety, in reaching soon after sunrise the coast of Cornwall, from which the homeward-bound vessel had been not many miles distant when the terrible fire had occurred.

When the worst of the peril was over, and the raft, under a favouring breeze, was floating towards the land, Mr. Gray, who felt a strong interest in Reginald Clare, asked the poor lad some questions regarding his family and position. He knew already that the boy was the orphan of a missionary who had died at Sierra Leone ; he now found that young Reginald was returning to England, to be dependent upon an uncle whom he had never seen.

"I am glad that you have succeeded in saving something," observed Mr. Gray, who

had himself preserved a box containing his principal treasures ; "doubtless that parcel, for which you risked your life, contains something of very great value."

"I do not know what it contains, sir," was Reginald's reply, as he languidly raised himself on his arm to gaze on the coast towards which they were approaching.

"Not know what it contains !" exclaimed Mr. Gray.

"It is not mine," said the boy in explanation, "it is a parcel intrusted to my care."

"By some friend whom you are most anxious to serve ?"

"No, sir ; by one who is almost a stranger ; but I promised to deliver it safely to his mother," said Reginald Clare.

"And you really rushed back into the burning cabin to carry off what was not of the slightest value to you, and, perhaps, of little to any one else ?"

The pale cheek of the boy flushed as if he were almost hurt at the question, and he made the simple reply, "I had been trusted—I had promised—what else could I have done ?"

The party safely landed in England. As

the fire had left poor Reginald penniless, Mr. Gray liberally paid for his journey to London. Reginald arrived that evening at his uncle's home, where he was received at first with amazement at his burnt and ragged state, till surprise was changed to pity, on the cause of his strange appearance being known.

It soon became clear to the boy that his uncle, Mr. Brown, and his wife, were not in easy circumstances, and that they were likely to feel his maintenance a very unwelcome burden. The thin sharp-featured lady, in her gown turned and dyed, looked gravely at the tattered clothes which must at once be replaced by new ones.

"Did you save nothing from the fire?" inquired Mrs. Brown, as on the following morning she poured out at the breakfast-table some very pale tea.

"Nothing, but a parcel which I had in charge for a Mrs. Bates of Eccleston Square,—here it is," and Reginald laid on the table the flat parcel wrapt in oil-cloth. "Could you kindly tell me how to send it?"

There was no difficulty in sending the parcel, as Mrs. Bates happened to live near ;

but Reginald could see that his aunt was provoked at this being the only thing which he had rescued out of the flames. Her impatience broke out into open expression, when, as the old couple and the boy sat together in the evening by the light of a single dim candle, a note was brought in from Mrs. Bates, thanking Mr. Clare coldly for bringing the parcel of dried fern-leaves, but informing him that they had been sadly broken and spoilt in the journey.

"Fern-leaves! trash!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, dropping the stitches of her knitting in vexation. "If you had only had the sense to carry out your desk instead; there was sure to be some money in it. If you had only saved a good suit of clothes, and not come here like a beggar!"

Mr. Brown leant back in his arm-chair and laughed. "Dried fern-leaves!" he chuckled, "and spoilt ones to boot! They've only been pulled out of one fire to be chucked into another!"

Poor Reginald was much mortified and vexed. The burns on his face and hands seemed to pain him more than ever. "And

yet," thought he, "I need not mind, I only did my duty. I had been trusted, and I had promised ; I could not have broken my word. How could I guess what was in the parcel ?"

"Rat-tat !" It was the knock of the evening postman. Another letter for Reginald Clare.

"I hope," said his sharp-featured aunt, "that it may contain something better than the last. Dried fern-leaves, forsooth ! What rubbish !"

Reginald broke the seal, and opened the letter. His hand almost trembled with excitement as he read it. With a sparkling eye he gave it to his aunt, who looked at it through her old steel spectacles.

"Well, here's something odd," she remarked. "Why, who writes this ? John Gray—I never heard of the name."

"He was my fellow-passenger—a merchant—and so kind."

"Kind, I should think so !" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, her sharp features relaxing into a smile.

"What does he say, wife ?" asked Mr. Brown with impatience.

"Why he offers to take this boy here into his house of business without any premium!" exclaimed the wife, handing over the letter to her husband, "because, as he writes, he knows the lad is to be trusted. It's the oddest fancy that ever I heard of. What is Reginald to him that he should take him by the hand—first pay for his journey to London, then offer—you see his own word—offer to treat him as a son!"

"Wife, wife!" cried Mr. Brown, laying his finger on the letter, and looking with hearty kindness at the orphan as he spoke, "you and I made a precious mistake when we fancied that Reginald had carried nothing away from the ship but a trumpery packet of fern-leaves! He carried away something worth more than all the gold and jewels of the Indies—a character for trustworthiness and truth, a character for doing his duty to God and man; and depend on't," continued the old man, raising his voice, "a boy who has that will never long be in want of a friend."



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THE TWO COMRADES.

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XXVIII.

The Best Friend.

HA! Carl Von Orlich! well met!" exclaimed the veteran Strasse, as on the night after one of the fiercest fights in the Seven Years' War, he suddenly came upon his comrade, and recognised his features by the red light of the watch-fire over which he was bending.

Von Orlich started up, and wrung the hand of his friend. "I little thought a few hours since," said he, "to see you or any other man in the land of the living."

"You have much cause to thank Him who has covered your head in the day of battle," observed Strasse, who was one who, in a godless age, did not shrink from openly confessing his faith, and by so doing had drawn upon himself many a scoff, some even from his friend Von Orlich.

THE END OF THE LINE

"It was hot work," said the officer, wiping his brow.

"When I saw you from a distance dash into the midst of what seemed a circle of smoke and fire, through which one could scarcely catch a glimpse of the flashing swords, I never expected, Von Orlich, to see you come forth alive."

"It was to rescue him,—the gallant Helden," said Von Orlich; "I saw him sorely beset, and if I had had a thousand lives, I'd have ventured them all for his sake. I bore him safe out of it all," added the officer, with a proud smile of triumph on his lip.

"Helden is a man who deserves a friend," observed Strasse.

"He does—better than any other man in Prussia!" exclaimed Von Orlich. "Did you never hear what he did when he was a gay young page in the service of our last king, Frederick William?"

"Not I," replied Strasse, seating himself, for he was weary with the struggle of the day, and glad to warm himself for awhile beside the red glowing fagots. "Tell me the tale of his youth; it may serve to while

away a few weary minutes, for as my turn for duty will soon come, it is not worth while to lie down and sleep."

"Helden, like most of our Prussian youth of gentle blood, was brought up at a military academy. There he formed a warm friendship with a lad of somewhat lower rank, and much poorer family than his own. They were never separated, Carl and he,—studies, sports, hopes, pleasures, everything they had in common. Never did brothers cling more closely together than they. When the youths left the academy their paths divided. Helden, who had relatives of rank, became a page at the court of the king; Carl, who had neither money nor interest, entered the ranks of the army. But the tie was not broken between them, as with most men it would have been. The page, midst the splendours of a court, remained true to the friendship of his boyhood.

"Carl was of a somewhat wild and reckless nature; perhaps it stung his pride to find himself in a position so much below that of his late companions: be that as it may, he had not been a month in the army before he

got into serious disgrace,—overstayed leave, was out of barracks till midnight, and was sentenced to receive a public flogging. You know, Strasse, with what terrible severity that punishment is inflicted in the army; to many it is equal to a sentence of death,—to Carl it was far worse than death! The agony might be great,—but it was the shame that was intolerable! The very horror of the idea of a public flogging threw the young soldier into a fever, and threatened to turn his brain.”

“I do not marvel at that,” observed Strasse, as he stretched his hands to the warming blaze.

“Helden heard of the sentence passed upon his friend, and resolved to make every effort to save him. He drew out a simple but touching petition to the king, and ventured himself to present it; a task requiring some courage, for you know the character of Frederick William, and his excessive severity in whatever related to the discipline of his army.”

“It was something like presenting a petition to a lion to spare the prey under his paw,” observed Strasse with a smile.

"And the king received it much as the lion might have done," rejoined Von Orlich. "He was roused to one of his storms of fury, tore the petition in pieces, and Helden was fortunate enough to escape with nothing worse than a torrent of abuse."

"So Carl underwent his sentence of course?" asked Strasse.

"Hear to the end," replied his comrade. "Any one but Helden would have given up in despair all further attempt to rescue his friend, but true as steel as he was, he resolved to make yet another. Helden drew out a second petition, and on the night before the morning on which the flogging was to take place, he went to the ante-chamber with it in his pocket, with the intention of presenting it to the monarch."

"He was a bold youth!" remarked Strasse; "when we recall how nearly our late king put to death his own son and heir for a very trifling cause, one cannot but marvel at the perseverance of Helden."

"The king," continued Von Orlich, "was engaged till far into the night, in secret conference with one of his ministers. Helden,

full of deep anxiety, remained in the ante-room waiting. So long had he to wait, so weary he grew, less perhaps from the lateness of the hour than the wear upon his own spirits, that sleep overcame the poor youth. The king, happening to come out of his cabinet, found his page in deep slumber in an arm-chair, with what looked like a second petition sticking half out of his pocket.

“‘If that audacious young scapegrace dare to pester me again with his petitions, he shall get something sharper than words!’ Such, I suspect, was his majesty’s thought, when, without awakening the page, curiosity made him draw forth the scroll. Perhaps, however, his countenance changed, when his eye glanced over the strange petition which it contained. It was very brief, but to the purpose; and was, as well as I can remember, in these words: ‘Sire, if the sentence passed on Carl must be executed, I entreat your majesty’s permission to suffer instead of my friend.’”

“A strange petition, indeed!” exclaimed Strasse; “what said the king to the offer?”

“Stern and rigid as he was,” replied Von Orlich, “such generous friendship, such brave”

self-devotion, could not but touch his heart. I know not how long Helden slumbered ; he was startled from his sleep by the sound of the bell rung by the king in his cabinet.

“ ‘Now for the effort !’ thought Helden, as he sprang forward with a beating heart to obey the desired and yet dreaded summons. He found the king sitting alone, looking more than usually stern. Helden received some trifling order from the monarch, who then motioned to him to retire.

“ ‘Now, or never !’ said Helden to himself ; ‘the day will soon dawn, and at sunrise poor Carl is to suffer !’

“ ‘Why do you delay ?’ asked the king very harshly, fixing his freezing gaze on the page.

“ ‘Sire, pardon !’ exclaimed Helden, and bending his knee, he drew forth a scroll, and presented it to his sovereign.

“ ‘Will you stand by the consequences ?’ demanded the king, without touching the paper.

“ ‘I will, sire,’ replied the generous friend.

“ ‘Read the contents, then, young man !’ said the king.

"Helden opened the scroll, and started to his feet with an exclamation of joyful surprise. The paper contained, not his own generous offer, but a full free pardon for his friend, drawn out and signed by the monarch himself!"

"God had touched the king's heart," observed Strasse.

"Be that as it may," said Von Orlich, "Carl was saved from a punishment which would have driven him mad; and he lived to pay back this day part of the debt of gratitude which he owed to the best of friends!"

"What!" exclaimed Strasse in surprise, "you yourself are the Carl of whom you speak?"

"Ay, I have struggled upwards in life, won honours"—a star was glittering on his breast—"I have gained the wealth and position which are the prizes held out by war; but were the king to make me a duke," continued Von Orlich with emotion, "the pleasure and the honour would be small compared to what I felt to-day in proving my gratitude to the man who once offered to suffer in my stead!"

"It is strange," observed Strasse with a

thoughtful sigh, as he looked into the flickering fire, "how apt we are to reserve all our gratitude for our fellow-man, forgetful of the Friend who not only offered to suffer, but actually did suffer in our stead! You braved fire and sword for one who had loved and saved you; shall our love be cold, and our courage faint, only when our debt is infinite, and our Benefactor divine?"

Von Orlich made no reply; but as he silently gazed up into the blue starry heavens, almost for the first time in his life the heart of the war-worn veteran rose in thanksgiving to God!





XXIX.

Blowing Bubbles.



"H, how charming it is blowing bubbles!" exclaimed little Annie, as, pipe in hand, she watched the bright glittering ball of air rising on high.

"Bubbles are so beautiful!" said Tommy. "See, mine is of all colours, red, green, and blue—just because the sun shines upon it! Who would think that a little soap and water could be blown into anything so pretty."

"I wonder why Harry does not join us in our play," observed Louisa, as she bent over the bowl of suds; "if he has no pipe, I will lend him mine."

"No, thank you, Looloo," said Harry, who, though he was not himself blowing bubbles, was watching his brother and sisters. "I do not care much for the bubbles, because they

break in a moment and nothing is left behind. I should like to blow solid bubbles—something that I could keep.”

“Solid bubbles! who ever heard of such things!” exclaimed Louisa; and Charley, who was at the instant filling an immense ball, gave a little laugh, and broke it!

“Oh! what a pity!” cried Louisa.

“Never mind; he’ll soon have another on his pipe,” observed Harry. “Do you know that grandpapa said last night that some people go on blowing bubbles to the end of their lives?”

“I don’t know what grandpapa could mean,” observed Louisa, glancing at the old gentleman, who sat in his arm-chair, and who appeared to be fast asleep. “Blowing bubbles is nice play for us, but it is not an amusement that grown people care for.”

“Ah! grandpapa had a hidden meaning; he wanted us to find it out. He meant that men and women sometimes take great delight in things which break and burst like bubbles, and leave nothing behind. He told me to try and find out what some of those things are, and I was turning over the matter

in my head just now, as I looked at Tommy and his bubble."

Louisa put down her pipe ; Charley shook the soap-suds from his ; Harry's words had set them both thinking ; but Tommy and Annie, who were younger, went merrily on with their play.

"I think," said Harry, "that I have found out something that both children and grown people run after, and which yet is not more solid than a bubble."

"What can that be ?" asked Louisa.

"Well, it is *praise*," answered Harry.

"We all like praise," said the little girl.

"Ah ! yes ; praise from mamma when we deserve it ; praise from the wise and good. But I fancy that some, and perhaps we ourselves, like praise when we know it to be nothing but flattery, as light as that ball now floating over Annie's little head."

"Such praise," said Louisa with a smile, "as was given you by the fine lady who stroked your hair, and patted your cheek, and called you a wonderful boy, because you repeated your poem so nicely."

"And we heard that she told her cousin

afterwards that I was a spoilt little monkey, who should be packed off to school," laughed Harry.

"Oh! such praise as that is a bubble, and a very poor bubble indeed!"

"And yet even grown people often run after it," said Harry; "they like to fancy that it is solid, and are dreadfully vexed and disappointed when it disappears into nothing."

"I know something else that melts like a bubble," said the thoughtful Louisa. "I think that *beauty* is like a bubble. Don't you remember Miss Molle, with her pretty pink cheeks and long curly hair! I saw her after her illness. Her face was yellow, her hair cropped short—not a bit of beauty was left! It had all disappeared like a bubble!"

"And the lovely flowers in mamma's vase that were so much admired when she put them in, were to-day only fit to be thrown away!"

"I think that *pleasure* is like a bubble!" sighed Charley. "How jolly I was at the thought of going this morning to the farm, seeing the lambs and the calf, and bringing back the hen and chickens! Then came the bad news that the farmer's child had the

measles, and all the pleasure that I had felt just disappeared like a bubble !”

“Ah !” exclaimed Louisa, “we want *solid* bubbles—something that we can keep.”

“Yes, my children,” said their grandfather, raising himself on his chair, and putting away the handkerchief which he had placed over his eyes to keep out the light ; “we all want something solid, something that will not vanish into air the moment that we touch it. You have said that *praise*, *beauty*, and *pleasure*, are like bubbles—alas ! how many have found them so. See, for instance, the great Napoleon, who pursued *praise*, or what he called *fame*, so eagerly, that he cared not what ruin and misery he brought to thousands, so that all the world should say, ‘What a mighty conqueror is he.’ He grasped the bubble and it broke, and left him to die a lonely exile, a disappointed man. And so with *beauty* and with *pleasure* ; these are things which pass away : the loveliest face must fade—the greatest earthly joy depart.”

“Oh, that we could keep them !” sighed Louisa.

“There are joys set before us, my child,

that are lasting as well as bright. There is a beauty which never can fade. There is a word of praise which will thrill the hearer with a never-ending delight. To-morrow is Sunday," continued the old gentleman; "I wish that you would search your Bibles, and each bring me after church-time one verse describing *praise*, *beauty* and *pleasure*, such as are lasting and precious, and can never vanish away like the perishing bubbles of air."

I will give the verses brought by Harry, Louisa, and Charley. Perhaps my young readers may like to find some others for themselves.

PRAISE.

"His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

BEAUTY.

"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

PLEASURE.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."



XXX.

Go and do Likewise.



MAKE haste, make haste, or I do believe that the train will be off!" exclaimed Arthur, hurrying with his two brothers along the high road, towards a small station at which the train was to call at ten.

"I really can hardly keep up with you, Arthur," said Peter; "you rush on like a steam-engine yourself."

"If any of us had only a watch to tell us the exact time,—but the train comes so fast, and gives so little notice,—and only think if we were to miss it!"

"What a splendid day we have for our trip!" cried Mark; "not a cloud to be seen in the sky! I do long to see the Crystal Palace; they say that it is the most beautiful thing in the world!"

"How kind it is in uncle to give us such a treat!" said Arthur, his rosy face beaming with pleasure. "We have never had such a holiday before! Oh! let's make haste—come on, come on!"

"What's that sound!" exclaimed Mark, stopping short.

"Not the railway whistle, I hope!" cried Arthur.

"It's a loud cry of distress from the end of that field," said Peter, looking alarmed.

"There it is again!" cried Arthur; "some one is in terror or in pain!"

"I daresay," said Mark impatiently; "but you know we've no time for delay!"

"I suspect that it is some one hurt by the bull that is kept in that field," cried Peter. "I can see the creature through the hedge!"

"Can you see any human being?" said Arthur.

"No, no one; but the voice shows where the person must be."

"We cannot wait any longer," said Mark; "remember that if we are late for this train, we must give up the treat altogether."

"I cannot bear to go with those shrieks in my ears!" replied Arthur.

"Then I will go on without you," said Mark, and he ran on, as if to make up for lost time.

"Peter, we should get over that stile, and go to see what is the matter," said Arthur.

"Perhaps we ought, but—but you know that there is the bull in the field!"

"He is a very quiet one."

"Yes, generally, but he may be in a savage mood now. I feel sure," added the boy, grasping his brother's arm, "that he must have gored the poor child whose screams we hear!"

Arthur looked grave and anxious; his brother was older than he, and Arthur had been accustomed to lean upon his opinion.

"Will you go, Peter?" he said at last.

"Not I,—it would be folly,—we will send some one from the station."

"Ah! if they would attend to us boys,—and even if they would, help might not arrive for half an hour, and then it might come too late! Oh! Peter,—that is a terrible cry!"

"I can't bear to stay and hear it!" ex-

claimed Peter ; and so saying, he turned and ran along the road as fast as Mark had done before him.

And did Arthur follow his brothers ? No, he did not ; he went back to the stile, hastily clambered over it, and with many an uneasy glance at the bull, that was cropping the grass at no great distance, fearful of running, lest it should draw him after him, Arthur made his way to the spot whence the cries proceeded.

Was Arthur less eager than the other boys to enjoy his treat ? was he less afraid of being gored by a bull ? By no means, for Arthur was the youngest of the three ; he had hardly slept the night before from thought of the coming pleasure, and he was by no means particularly courageous by nature. Why, then, did he turn back and cross the field ? It was that the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, that he had learned in the Bible to forget self, and that he sought every opportunity, by kindness and compassion to his fellow-creatures, to show his love and gratitude to his heavenly Master.

Resolute, therefore, neither to let fear nor pleasure stop him in the course of duty,

Arthur proceeded on his way, though I cannot say that his ears were not anxiously listening for the sound of the railway whistle, or that he did not often fearfully turn to see if the bull were running after him. He neither heard the whistle, however, nor was pursued by the bull, but reached in safety the other end of the field, where he found, lying in a dry ditch, just beneath the hedge, a poor girl of about his own age.

"What is the matter with you?" said Arthur, stooping to help her to rise; "I am afraid that you are very much hurt."

The girl was crying so violently that it was some time before Arthur could make out the cause of her distress. It appeared that she had fallen in getting over the hedge, and had sprained her ankle so severely as to be unable to rise.

"I thought that no one would ever come!" sobbed the girl, "though I screamed as loud as I could!"

"But what can I do for you?" said Arthur; "I am not strong enough to carry you away."

"Oh! do you see that little white cottage

there, just on the side of the hill ! my father lives there ; if you would only go and tell him, I am sure that he would come and help me."

"If I go all that distance," thought poor Arthur, "I shall be quite certain to miss the train." But he looked again at the suffering girl, and thought of the holy history of one who had compassion on a poor injured traveller ; he remembered the words, *Go, and do thou likewise*, and determined to give up his own pleasure for the comfort of another. Perhaps only a child can tell how great was the sacrifice to the child !

Arthur ran in the direction of the cottage, arrived there breathless and heated, and found the girl's father standing at his door talking to a baker, who, in his light cart, was going his daily round. A few words from the panting boy explained to the man the accident that had happened to his daughter.

"I am much obliged to you," said the cottager ; "I will go to poor Joan directly."

The eye of Arthur fell upon the Dutch clock hanging up near the fire-place. The hour was not quite so late as his fears had

imagined, but still it wanted only eight minutes to ten !

"I cannot be in time for the train," said the tired boy, sadly, half to himself ; "my brothers will be off without me !"

"Did you want to meet the train, and have you been delayed by your kindness ?" said the baker, leaning from his cart, with a look of interest. "Jump up here beside me, you've a chance of it yet,—the train may not be punctual to a minute, and Dobbin trots as fast as any horse in the county."

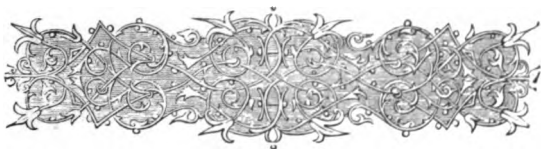
In a moment the eager boy was up in the cart, and the baker seemed as eager ; you might have thought, too, that the horse knew the state of the case, he dashed on at such a fine rate ! And the train was five minutes beyond its time ; not till Arthur had sprung down from the cart at the station, and stood thanking the kind baker who had helped him in his need, was the long shrill scream of the whistle heard, and the dark rattling line of carriages appeared. He was in time ! Oh yes, he was in time.

Mark and Peter enjoyed their visit to the Crystal Palace, but their pleasure was as

nothing compared to that of Arthur. His whole soul was overflowing with pure delight ; he felt inclined to go springing and bounding along, his heart was so free from a care ! As a good man once said, "How pleasant it is when the bird in the bosom sings sweetly !"


If my reader would know what is real happiness, real delight, let him seek it in forgetting self, and following the steps of his Lord. Where there is sorrow which you can cheer, or distress which you can relieve, remember the Samaritan, who beheld a wounded stranger and would not pass by on the other side ; do not turn a deaf ear to the voice of pity, but oh, Christian child ! *Go and do likewise !*





XXXI.

Heir to Something Better.

ELL, he's a beauty, he is!" cried Betsy Bonser; "but fine feathers make fine birds, and his mother dresses him up as if he were Prince of Wales at least."

"Who is it, neighbour?" asked the feeble voice of Mary Blane, a sick woman who was lying in bed in the little cottage out of the window of which Betsy Bonser was looking as she spoke.

"Why, it's Squire Knight's little boy, to be sure—hat, feather, and all—sitting in his little carriage with his dog on his knee. How unequal things are in this world! There were you with your dozen children, scarce able to put shoes on their feet, or bread in their mouths, and a thirteenth baby must come"—she glanced at a little creature asleep in

its cradle,—“just to be a burden and a trouble!”

“He’s welcome—bless him!” whispered the mother.

“Welcome! well mothers have an odd way of taking these things,” said Betsy. “I know the squire’s baby was welcome, for he was heir to ten thousand a year!”

“And I hope that my baby is heir to something better,” said Mary with a gentle smile. “If he be God’s child, he’ll have an inheritance one day in heaven!”

“Well,” began Betsy—but she started with surprise, for she saw that the squire’s lady now stood in the cottage! Mrs. Knight had knocked so gently, and Betsy had talked so loudly, that the knock had not been heard, nor the soft step of the lady as she entered the poor woman’s cottage.

“Oh! beg your pardon, ma’am, I didn’t see you,” cried Betsy, dropping half a dozen curtsies.

Mrs. Knight had brought many nice things for the sick mother, and some little pieces of dress for Mary’s baby, which her own boy had long outgrown. The lady took, I say, many

things to the cottage ; she took one thing away with her—the remembrance of the poor woman's words, which she had chanced to overhear : “ I hope that my baby is heir to something better.”

When Mrs. Knight returned to her boy, whom she had left outside with his nurse, she thought again and again of what Mary Blane had said. “ Ah ! ” reflected the lady, “ my boy will have everything that money can give him, but, after all, the *best* things are as free to the poor as to the rich. My child would be poor indeed if he were not heir to something better.”

When a few months had passed away, the squire's little son fell ill. The groom mounted a horse and rode off at full speed for a doctor ; another was sent for from London ; everything was procured that could possibly help to save the child from dying. But if God wills to take a little lamb to his fold above, doctors and medicine and mother's fond care cannot keep him on earth. The squire's little darling was taken early to heaven.

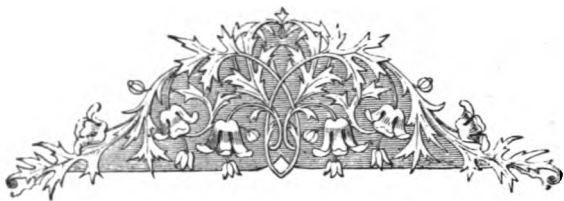
Then people said, “ What a grievous thing it was that the heir of such an estate should

die!" If one of Mary Blane's thirteen children had been taken, the world would have thought less about it, though every one was as dear to her as Victor Knight had been to his mother. And friends wondered how poor Mrs. Knight could bear her grief so meekly, and never murmur when called to part with the child whom she loved so well. It was the thought of her little one's happiness that soothed her sorrowing heart; she looked round on the splendid dwelling that might one day have been her son's, and repeated the poor woman's words, "My baby is heir to something better."

After some time God comforted the poor lady by giving her another child. There were great rejoicings in the squire's house when a second heir was born; bonfires were lighted, tenants were feasted, and an ox was roasted whole. Mrs. Knight was again a happy and thankful mother. But she never forgot her first little treasure, whose picture, with his dog on his knee, hung just opposite to the seat in her own quiet room where the lady used often to read the Bible. And when in her reading she came to an account of an

inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, she would lift up her tearful eyes to the picture, and with a grateful heart would say, "Yes, earth's wealth and honours must pass away; thank God, through Christ, my baby was heir to something better!"





XXXII.

John Kittle.



N a small lowly dwelling in the good town of Plymouth, nearly forty years ago, sat an aged woman engaged in darning a stocking. That she was not rich, could be seen from her appearance ; that she was ignorant, might be judged from the coarse untidy scrawl in her window, which announced that she sold "milk and cream."

A poor boy, who happened to be passing with a book in his hand, stopped and earnestly fixed his eyes on this label, glanced in at the open door, and then, as if encouraged by the gentle face of her who sat plying her needle, ventured into the house.

"What do you want?" said the old woman to the stranger ; but the boy answered not a word. Alas ! the sounds of nature, the sing-

ing of birds, the tones of music, the voice of kindness, were to him for ever silenced. A fearful accident had quite deprived him of his hearing, and dreary stillness was around him till his death. But his eyes seemed to read that to which his ears could not listen ; he now looked anxiously into the old woman's face, and opening the book which he carried, drew out of it a paper upon which "milk and cream" appeared, neatly drawn in coloured letters. He pointed to the window, and, speaking with difficulty in a strange and hollow voice, said to the woman, "This for a penny."

She replied, but he knew not what she said ; he thought that she considered his little charge too much. "A halfpenny, then," the poor child said ; and distressed at seeing that her lips still moved, he put his fingers to his poor deaf ears, to show her the affliction which it had pleased God to send him. A kindly pitying look came over the face of the good old woman ; she drew a penny from the till, and, beckoning him to wait till she came back, left the room, and presently returned with a nice cup of milk and a piece of cake, on which the deaf boy made a delicious repast.

May we not believe that this little act of kindness was not forgotten by Him who has promised that he who gives even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward ?

But how little did the good woman dream that the poor deaf boy who was trying to earn a few pence by the sale of his little slips of paper, was one who in after-life should earn for himself a distinguished and honourable name !—that the writings of Kitto should be known and valued by rich and poor in distant lands as well as in his own—that the Queen herself should honour him with a pension—that he who drew the little label for the window should become an author who would direct thousands and tens of thousands to the blessed narrow path in which he himself walked !

I need hardly tell you that Kitto, even when a boy, was full of industry and perseverance. It was his delight to improve his own mind ; and under every disadvantage he did so. He studied when in the poor-house ; he studied when labouring hard to earn his bread as a shoemaker's apprentice. But

amongst the many volumes which he eagerly read, that which he most studied, that which he most read, was the Word of God, which makes men *wise unto salvation*. It is written of Kitto that, when quite a child, "the book he most valued was an old Bible."


Dear children, could this be said of you ? You may, perhaps, never be learned or famous, like Kitto ; but if, like him, you give your hearts unto God, and remember your Creator in the days of your youth, a richer blessing will be yours than all the praises of men, or the wealth of the world. Kitto was poor, but the true riches were his. He laboured hard, but he laboured not in vain ; for he looked forward* in humble faith to that blessed day when "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," and the first sound that breaks the long silence may be the welcoming voice of the Saviour.





XXXIII.

The Thicket of Furze.

 "WHAT a plague lessons are!" exclaimed Rosey, with a long, weary yawn, as she bent over her French exercises, wishing from her heart that grammar had never been invented.

"Work on, little one!" said her brother George, who had overheard the exclamation; "remember that it is doubly your duty to be steady and industrious while mamma is away."

"It is so difficult!" sighed the child.

"Many a duty is difficult," answered the elder brother; "but that is no reason for shirking it. Attending to little duties while we are young helps us to perform great ones when we are old. Do your lessons bravely, dear Rosey, and if they be finished by twelve,

you shall have a little story to reward your diligence."

The word "story" called up a dimple upon Rosey's round cheek; she turned with more resolution to her tiresome lesson, and the task was ended by twelve.

"Now for my story," cried the child, bringing her little chair close to her brother, and resting her arm on his knee, as—looking up gaily into his face—she claimed the fulfilment of his promise.

George looked into the fire for a few moments, as if to draw some ideas from the cheerful blaze; stirred it, and then leaning back on his chair, began the following little tale:—

"Methought I lay down and slept, and dreamed; and in my dream I beheld a path through a verdant meadow, along which many a child gaily tripped, gathering the lovely wild flowers that grew on either side. But at one end of the meadow the path was crossed by a thicket of sharp prickly furze, and the name of the thicket was Difficulty. The bushes grew so thick and close, that I wondered whether any child would be able to pass them; and I sat me down to watch how

the little travellers would get through the Difficulty in their way."

"I suppose that I was one of the little travellers," laughed Rosey, "and the furze-bushes were my horrid French verbs!"

"There are a great many 'Difficulties' in a child's life," replied George with a smile; "some find it difficult to rise early, some to be punctual or neat, some to control their tempers, others to be generous and kind. There are plenty of furze-bushes in our path, but we must not, like lazy cowards, suffer them to stop us in our onward course."

"Please tell me about the children in your dream," said Rosey.

"The first who reached the thicket was a little girl, with ruddy cheek and curly hair, who had been one of the gayest of the gay, as she went dancing through the flowery mead. But as soon as she came to Difficulty all the cheerfulness fled from her face, she shrank from the first touch of the prickles as if she had expected that life was to be all sunshine and flowers, and sitting down on the grass by the side of the path, she burst into a flood of tears."

"Oh, the cowardly little creature!" cried Rosey.

"Then there came up to the spot a young boy, whose appearance to me was not pleasing. He never looked straight before him, but had a kind of cunning side glance, which made me fancy him less open and frank than a Christian boy ought to be. He made no attempt to push through the thicket, but went creeping along the edge of it, hoping to *creep round*. Difficulty instead of passing straight onwards. I watched him to see if he could succeed in his aim, but he had not gone many steps before his feet stuck fast in a bog, and it was only by violent and painful efforts that he could struggle out again, to return to the point whence he had started, with his shoes all clogged with clay, his time lost, and his object not gained."

"I suppose that he was a lazy boy," remarked Rosey, "putting off does not help us over our difficulties. I have sometimes tried that plan of creeping round, and I always stuck in the bog!"

"Then," pursued George, "a boy with firm step and resolute air came up to the thicket.

I saw something like a smile on his face as he looked at the Difficulty before him. He set his teeth hard together, clenched his hands, and then with bold determination made a dash at the thicket. On he went, that stout-hearted lad, dashing aside the prickles, pushing forward as if he scarcely felt the scratches upon his bleeding hands. Trampling down, struggling through Difficulty, he was soon safe and triumphant on the opposite side ! ”

‘Little Rosey clapped her hands. “He was a fine fellow !” cried she. “I think that Nelson and Wellington went dashing through difficulties like that. But I can’t do so,” added the child more gravely ; “I have not that bold, strong spirit. I am afraid that I am most like the little cowardly girl who cried when she saw the thicket.”

“Is not that because you do not look upon your childish troubles as a means of testing your patience and obedience ; is it not because you do not seek for help from above, even in the little trials of your life ? ”

“They seem such trifles to look at in *that* way,” said Rosey, gazing thoughtfully into the fire.

"A writer has said that 'trifles form the sum of human things;' and the life of a child, more especially, is made up of what we call trifles. Yet children, as well as those who are old, are required to glorify God; and as they can do no *great* thing for him, it is by their cheerful obedience, diligence, and sweet temper, that they must show their gratitude and love. And does not this thought, dear Rosey, make the performance of simple daily duties a bright and a holy thing? If what we do, we do as *unto the Lord*, feeling that his eye is upon us, and seeking in all things to please him, we find pleasure even in irksome tasks, sweetness in what otherwise would be bitter."

Rosey looked as if she scarcely understood the words of her brother, so, to make their meaning clearer, George went on with his tale:—

"There was one other child whom I saw in my dream advancing towards the thicket Difficulty. I felt sorry for the little girl, for she was feeble and pale, and as she moved over the grass I saw that she was both lame and barefoot! 'Alas!' thought I, 'if she can scarcely make her way along the smooth

and pleasant path, how will she ever struggle through the prickly furze before her!’ Perhaps the same thought was in the mind of the little traveller, for she paused before the thicket, and looked forwards with a scared and troubled air. Then she clasped her hands, and raised her eyes towards the soft blue sky above her, and all trace of fear or care left her smiling face. What was my surprise to see two beautiful little wings, glittering like gold in the sunlight, and bright with the rainbow’s tints, gradually unfold from her shoulders! The child shook them for a few moments, as if to try their powers, and then rising above earth, and all its thorns, she gently flew over the painful place, and alighting safely on the ground beyond, looked back with a bright and thankful smile on the difficulty which she had passed.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Rosey, “what would I not give to have such beautiful wings!”

“Those wings, dear Rosey, are *faith* and *love*, which lift us above the world, which bear us onward in a heavenly course, which make us find our chief delight in doing the will of our heavenly Father.”

"I have not these wings!"


George drew his little sister closer to him, and bending down his head towards her, whispered, "*Ask, and ye shall receive.* God only can cause those wings to grow, by the power of his Holy Spirit; he can give them strength to bear us unharmed over all the rough places of life; and the waters of the river of death shall not wet even the soles of the feet of those who pass their depths, buoyed up on the glorious pinions of *faith* and *love*!"





XXXIV.

The Little Sower.

OW I wish that I could be like little James Duncan!" said Flora, as she laid down with a sigh "The Young Recruiting-Sergeant," one of a series of "Sunday Stories," which had been given to her on her tenth birthday. "But oh, I am sure that I could never do as he did; I could never speak to sinners about the Lord! Perhaps if I had little brothers and sisters, perhaps I might speak to them; but I've none! Mary, our maid, knows more of holy things than I do myself; and as for visitors to the house, I can scarcely lift up my eyes if strangers are present—I can hardly utter a word. I am sure when I heard the ploughman Thomas say wicked things the other day in the field, I could as soon have died as rebuked him, as James rebuked the old man!

And yet," added the child, leaning her head on her hand, "I do so wish that I could do *something* for souls, that I could help a little—ever so little—in recruiting soldiers for the heavenly King!"

The eye of Flora fell upon a little paper of the "Tract Society." "A TRUE STORY OF LUCKNOW," was its name. Young as Flora was, she had read it, and had cried over the tale of the brave young soldier, carrying the lady's written sheet in his bosom to battle, and giving it, stained with his blood, to the friend whom he had been the means of leading to God.

"That tract went to *my* heart," thought Flora; "perhaps it would go to the hearts of others. It says just what I should like to say, if I were old enough and brave enough to speak. I wonder if I could manage to give it away. Only two shillings for a whole hundred copies! Then I could get twenty-five for my bright little sixpence, and twenty-five people might learn so much about God. I know that mamma has laid in a good store, I will ask her if I may buy some from her."

Mrs. Lane made no difficulty; but she

smiled as she expressed a doubt as to whether her little girl could contrive to dispose of so many tracts. Flora counted her packet over and over again. "It is like a little basket of seed," she said; "and who can tell that a beautiful tree may not spring up some day from my sowing!"

But Flora was a very shy little girl, one who used to colour up to her eyes if she had but to speak to a stranger. She soon began to think that it would be almost as hard to present a tract as it would be to talk upon the subject of religion. She felt that she could do neither; and she was almost inclined, in despair, to return all the twenty-five copies to her mother.

On the following day, Flora was sent on a message to the village, accompanied by Mary, her maid. She put three of her tracts into her bag, though she scarcely hoped that she would have courage to give one. As Flora walked on, an idea came into her mind, which showed perhaps more timidity than wisdom. She heard the slow rumbling sound of wheels, though a bend in the lane prevented her from seeing the cart which was coming up the road.

Flora hastily placed one copy of her "True Story of Lucknow" on the hedge which skirted the path. "The carter may see it, and take it," she said to herself; and she walked on fast, quite afraid even to look at the man as she passed him, lest he should suspect that she had anything to do with the tract left on the hedge!

When Flora had finished her business in the village, she was very impatient to see on her return whether the carter had taken her paper.

"It is not where I put it," she cried joyfully, as she hastened up to the place.

"No, miss, but here it is," observed Mary, picking out of a ditch into which the wind had blown it, the soiled and spoilt "True Story of Lucknow."

Poor Flora looked sadly on the paper. That copy could be given to no one! "I see that my cowardly way does not do," said the child, "but I am afraid to try any other. I don't think that any of my bundle of tracts will ever be given away."

As Flora and her maid proceeded slowly along the lane, they saw at some distance a

beggar, clothed in rags, and with a wooden leg, sitting down under the hedge.

"Ah, how very weary and sad that man looks!" cried the kind-hearted child; "perhaps he has walked many a long mile, and has neither friends nor home. I think that I have a penny in my bag;" and as Flora searched for the copper coin, it struck her that the penny might be liked as well if it were wrapped up in a tract. "The one would get food for the body, the other might be food for the soul," thought the child.

"Ah, miss," said Mary, as she observed her young lady wrapping up the penny in the paper, "don't forget to pray for a blessing upon it!"

"I'll drop in the little seed with a prayer," said Flora; and as she approached the poor beggar, she repeated, but not aloud—

"Give me grace the seed to sow,
Let thy blessing make it grow,
For the Redeemer's sake!"

Flora was sure that the penny would be welcome, even if the paper were not, so it was without hesitation or fear that she placed both in the wrinkled hand of the beggar.

"God bless you, miss!" cried the old man, in such a hearty tone, and with such a kind smile, that the heart of Flora rejoiced. She glanced back when she had walked a few paces from the spot, and with pleasure exclaimed to the maid, "O Mary, he is reading the story!"

Near the door of Flora's home stood a curly-headed little boy, who had come with a basket of eggs. Encouraged by her success with the beggar, and less afraid of speaking to a child, Flora, after repeating her little silent prayer, thus addressed the boy at the door:

"Would you like something pretty to read?"

"I don't know how to read," replied the child with a stare.

Flora was drawing back disappointed, but on second thoughts stopped to ask another question:

"Is there any one at your home who can read?"

"Yees, faather can," replied the child, nodding his rough curly head.

"Would you take this to him?" said Flora timidly. The boy grinned, held out his red

little hand, and put the proffered paper carefully under his jacket.

On entering her home, Flora found two visitors with Mrs. Lane, a lady and her daughter.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Lane to Flora, after she had shyly shaken hands with the guests, "Mrs. Forester is kindly going to stay and dine with us. While the dinner is preparing, take your young friend to your own room, make her as happy as you can, and show her whatever may amuse her."

Glad of the permission to go and play freely together, Margaret Forester and Flora went cheerfully up the stairs. Flora showed her guest her dolls and her dolls' house, the golden fish in their crystal vase, and the pretty little bird that was so tame that it would perch on her head, and eat crumbs out of her lips.

"And you have plenty of books too," observed Margaret, glancing at a well-filled bookcase.

"Are you fond of reading?" inquired Flora, who had quite recovered from her shyness.

"I like stories," replied the young lady;

"but I am much fonder of being read to than of reading, for my eyes are weak, and get tired so soon."

"I have a beautiful story here, and a true one," said Flora; "it was written by a lady who was in India at the time of the dreadful mutiny."

"Oh, I like anything about India!" exclaimed Margaret. "My dear brother has gone out there as a soldier."

Wondering at the opportunity so unexpectedly given to her, Flora in a hesitating voice offered to read the story to her guest; the offer was willingly accepted, but scarcely had Flora finished two pages, when the bell sounded for dinner.

"I am sorry that you must stop," exclaimed Margaret; "I was getting interested in the story of the sick young soldier."

"You may take it with you, and keep it," cried Flora eagerly.

"I should like very much to take it home," replied Margaret; "but I certainly shall not keep it. A box is just going out to my brother, and as he is a soldier himself, and may like to read about soldiers, I shall send on the tract to him."

A keen sensation of pleasure thrilled through the bosom of the little sower, and, like a ray of sunshine, brightened all the remainder of that day. "To think of my little paper going thousands and thousands of miles, all over the wide blue sea, and then being read—and I hope prized—by some one whom I never have seen! Perhaps I may never see him at all till I meet him in heaven; and he may tell me there—O delightful thought!—that my little tale helped him to reach that happy place! Mamma said the other day that the holy Baxter received good from a tract left at his father's house by a tinker; and his writings have led many—oh, so many—to God! What a glorious tree, spreading its boughs over thousands, grew out of that one little tract!" Animated by such reflections, Flora prayed very earnestly, as she knelt by her cot that night, that God's blessing might go with her paper, as it had done with that of the tinker.

It was some time before Flora had distributed all her twenty-five copies of the story of Lucknow, though she tried to let no day pass without giving away at least one. Sometimes she felt discouraged, as many older than

Flora are, when they can see no good done by their efforts. She tried to remember then that a seed lies long hidden in the sod before it springs up into beauty. "*Be not weary in well-doing,*" the child often repeated to herself; "but oh, I wish that I knew that *one* soul—just *one*, had been really the better for my sowing!"

"Flora, my love," said her mother one morning, "put on your bonnet, and come out with me. I am going to carry a little soup to Thomas's wife, who is lying sick in her cottage down in the lane."

"O mamma," answered Flora, in a hesitating manner, "I don't much like to go to that cottage. Thomas uses such dreadful words—I should be quite afraid to meet him."

"Thomas is, I fear, not a good man," replied Mrs. Lane, "and his wife is much to be pitied. At this hour he is sure to be out at his work, and poor Mrs. Brown is glad of a visit."

The cottage was not far off, and Mrs. Lane and her little girl soon entered the humble abode, where, stretched on a bed of sickness, lay the ploughman's wife. The woman gladly welcomed her guests, and her little Sally

placed chairs for Flora and her mother. The eyes of both were immediately caught by the sight of a well-known tract, resting on the sick woman's pillow.

"Did the clergyman leave that tract here?" inquired Mrs. Lane, after asking several questions regarding the woman's illness.

"Oh no, ma'am, my little boy he brought it home some three weeks back, ma'am; he said as how a little lady gave it to him, and told him to carry it to his father. I'm sure it be a blessed tract," continued the poor cottager, tears rising in her eyes as she spoke; "it took my man's fancy, it did; he sat up reading it by the firelight, and many and many's the time that he's talked about it since. You see, ma'am, it puts all about sin and the Saviour so straight afore one, it seems to speak right to the heart; and that there blessed hymn in it, there's not one of us—not even little Tommy—as does not know it now every word! Oft I repeats it over in the night, when I can't get asleep for the pain! My husband's been a different man, ma'am, ever since the reading of that tract; he's taken to his Bible again, to find out the verses

that the lady wrote out ; and he said yesterday that he hoped when he died to go where the young soldiers had gone afore."


Flora could have leaped for joy, a joy perhaps the sweetest and purest that a mortal can taste on earth. She, child as she was, had helped a sinner to find the Saviour ; she had done something for an immortal soul ; and with delight she recalled the words in the Bible, *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*





XXXV.

Thorns and Flowers.

 **W**HAT can be the difference between Martha and Susan Williamson?" said old Dame Phillips. "They are as like as two cherries—the same rosy cheeks, the same height, the same hair, you could hardly know one from the other."

"No wonder, for they are twins," replied Widow Green.

"And yet, how is it that when one of them comes in, it seems as if a sunbeam were shining into the room; yet, when the other is near, you would think that she brought the cold east wind with her?"

"One lives for others, and one for herself; that's the difference between Martha and Susan," said Mrs. Green, as she poured out her cup of tea.

"Ah! I often think that they are like two travellers, walking through the world with baskets on their arms. Susan has filled her basket with roses, and wherever she goes there's the sweet smell and the pretty flowers to make every one round her glad. Martha has filled her basket with thorns; you fear to come near her for the prickles; she is scattering thorns wherever she passes, and leaves pain behind her wherever she has been!"

"I pity the children when they are left to her care," said the widow.

"Poor little lambs, they have their full share of the thorns. It is a word and a blow with her; and as for poor Albert, with his weak ankles, he may walk on till he drops afore she will take the trouble of carrying him one step. Why, here she is!" added the old woman, as Martha entered the house with a bold, careless air.

"Good day, Mrs. Phillips: I've come to borrow your warm new shawl. You see," added she, seeing a look of reluctance on the face of the rheumatic invalid, "I'm going to-morrow in the steamer to Greenwich, and it will be so cold on the water."

"Come to-morrow, then," said the good-natured dame; "why should I be all this cold evening without it?"

"Oh! it is not convenient to come to-morrow," cried Martha; "I'm off early, so please for it now:" and as she stepped carelessly forward to take the shawl from the shoulders of her shivering friend, she knocked down the cup which Mrs. Phillips had just filled. But Martha never said that she was sorry for the mischief done; she never even stopped to pick up the broken pieces; her only thought was ever *self*!

Having got all she wanted, Martha turned to depart, but lingered for a few minutes to talk.

"Ah! Mrs. Green, so your son has gone to sea, I hear. How the wind is blowing, to be sure. I could hardly get up the street! They say there has been a dreadful shipwreck off the Irish coast—every one lost!"

Mrs. Green clasped her hands, with a look of terror.

"I hope that the wind will have gone down before I start for Greenwich," said Martha, as she bounced out of the room, forgetting, of

course, to close the door. She was gone, but she had left the thorns behind her.

"In a few minutes a gentle tap was heard. "Come in," said Mrs. Phillips; and the bright kind face of Susan appeared.

"Good evening, Mrs. Phillips: I hope that you are feeling better. I have brought you a pair of mittens, which I have knit for you, to keep your poor hands warm in this cold weather. Mrs. Green, I'm so glad to see you; and will not you be glad to see *this*?" she added, holding up a letter, and then placing it in the mother's trembling hand, with pleasure almost equal to her own.

"My son's handwriting!" exclaimed Mrs. Green; "how did you come by it, my dear?"

"I knew that you were anxious for letters, so I stepped round by the post-office to ask if there were any for you."

"Bless you!" cried Mrs. Green, "you are always thinking of others."

When Susan entered the house, she had found gloom and anxiety there; before she left it, there were bright looks and smiles of hope and gratitude. She had left the roses behind her.

And can you guess the secret cause of her kindness, of the constant, cheerful benevolence which made her welcome to all? Why did she seem to live for others?—Because she *lived to God!* One sentence spoken by the blessed Saviour seemed ever present to her mind: “*Love one another as I have loved you.*” She knew that the Lord Jesus had “died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them” (2 Cor. v. 15).

Oh! dear reader, have *you* lived for yourself, or for your Lord; are you scattering roses or thorns?

On her way home Susan overtook an aged woman, bent down with years, and yet more with trouble, to judge from her sad, hopeless face. She carried a large bundle, which seemed too much for her strength. Cold as was the weather, she walked on but slowly, with a feeble, half-tottering step, often pausing, as though to take breath.

Susan paused; and her kind, pitying look seemed to encourage the poor old woman to address her.

“Could you, please, tell me the way to

John Street, my dear? I am a stranger in London."

"With pleasure," replied Susan; "let me see—the third turn to the left, then walk on till you come to a baker's shop, then—"

"I shall never make it out," said the old woman, with a hopeless air.

"Well, then, I'll go with you, and show you the way. Don't hurry yourself, you look feeble, and your bundle is heavy; let me carry it for you, it would be a pleasure to me!" and she relieved the poor stranger of her burden, as they passed through the cold, silent streets.

"You are good, very good!" sighed the old woman; "too good for this cold, heartless, miserable world!"

"I am sorry that you find it so miserable."

"Miserable enough! Here am I, a lone widow—I who have had a good husband, and three as fine boys as ever the sun shone upon! There is no comfort on earth for me!"

"But there is comfort in heaven! Do you not hope to see again those whom you have loved, never more to part? Do you not hope that they are happy now?"

"Ay, they are happy; for my husband

feared God, and my boys were taken before they knew evil. But here am I, a feeble old woman, without a friend on earth."

"But you have a Friend in heaven; there is comfort again!"

"Ay, if I could take it, my dear; but my heart is low, and my spirit weary, and everything looks dark around and above!"

Susan rather whispered than spoke, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. xlii. 11).

A tear rolled down the pale cheek of the stranger; but her heart felt lighter: she had met with one who could feel for her.

"I wish," said she, after a pause, "that I had thought more of these things when I was young like you. It doesn't do to put off; one's heart grows cold and hard: and, oh! it's a weary, weary thing, old age like mine; no comforts around one, nothing but troubles to look back upon, nothing but death to look forward to!" and she sighed heavily.

"And heaven beyond!" said Susan.

"Ah! if I were sure of *that*; but maybe

heaven is not for a poor, ignorant, sinful creature like me ! ”

“ I thought,” said Susan, timidly, “ that heaven was for those who believe, who repent, who love the Lord Jesus and one another.”

Not another word was spoken till they reached the house, when the aged stranger laid her trembling hand on the shoulder of her young guide.

“ God Almighty bless you ! ” she murmured ; “ you’ve spoken the first word of comfort that I’ve heard for many a long day. God will bless you, and make you an angel above, as you love to do angels’ work below ! ”

Reader ! may you thus pass through life, blessing and blessed, the roses which you scatter on the paths of others throwing sweetness over your own, and making soft your death-bed at the last !





XXXVI.

The Fall.

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF DR. KITTO.



O you remember the story of John Kitto, the poor deaf boy, who became so famous by his learning? You may, perhaps, like to know a little more about him, and of the sad accident which deprived him of his hearing.

Kitto had not always been deaf. He had listened to the sweet songs of birds, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of oxen, the thousand pleasant sounds of nature; and he had delighted, as you may do now, to hear the long amusing tales of a kind grandmother.

When twelve years old, he was engaged one day with his father, who was a mason, in repairing a house in Plymouth. It is generally best for us, when employed in useful work, to

give our thoughts as well as our strength to the business which we have to do. This was not just then the case with poor Kitto. His mind was running on various things ; amongst others, an amusing book which he hoped to read that evening, and a new smock-frock, made by his grandmother, which he was soon to wear. Little did he know what a day would bring forth—how much was to happen before he looked at that book, or put on that dress !

He had just reached the topmost round of a ladder, carrying a load of slates, when his foot slipped, and he was thrown from a height of five-and-thirty feet upon the hard stone pavement below !

Poor boy, it was wonderful that he lived ! A crowd soon gathered around, and his father, taking him up in his arms, carried him almost lifeless to his home.

Kitto was senseless for about a fortnight, and then awoke, as from a sleep, not knowing that anything had happened. He wondered to see by the clock that it was two hours beyond his usual time for rising ; but when he tried to get up, he found that his strength

was all gone ; and the friends around him seemed to keep so very still, that he was sure that he must have been ill, though he remembered nothing about his fall.

There was one thing, however, which he recollected well—that there was a book which he was impatient to read. He asked for it, but could hear no reply. “Why do you not speak? Let me have the book!” he said; still no one appeared to answer. At last a friend wrote on a slate that it had been returned to its owner.

“Why do you write to me?” cried the poor boy; “why not speak? Speak! speak!” Then again the friend wrote on the slate the terrible words, “*You are deaf!*”

Oh! how thankful should we be if we are preserved from such trials, and have all our precious senses perfect! We are too apt to forget our many blessings, and to be ungrateful to the merciful Giver of them. That you may see that poor Kitto was not so, even amid his heavy trials, I will now copy out for you part of a long and beautiful prayer which he wrote when *a deaf young pauper in the workhouse!*

“Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, and

grant that I may be one of that happy number to whom it shall be said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!' I ask not from thee, O Lord, worldly blessings. I ask of thee neither fame, nor riches, nor honours; but, Lord, I ask of thee a pure and contrite spirit; I ask of thee patience, to bear with resignation whatever afflictions thou art pleased to send me.

"I thank thee, O Father, for the manifold favours I have received from thee. I thank thee for life, health, friends, connections. I thank thee that thou hast forborne hitherto to punish me as my sins have deserved. I thank thee for all the good I have enjoyed, or may enjoy hereafter; particularly for the protection thou hast afforded me heretofore, especially in the past night; and I humbly pray thee to continue my Protector through the coming day, and grant that at the end thereof I may look back on a well-spent day. These, and all other favours which are for my good, I pray thee grant in the name of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ."



XXXVII.

The Caliph.



MOTHER, is it really true that all our best doings cannot make us worthy of heaven?"

"Most true, my child."

"And why is it so?"

"Because our best doings are mingled with sin."

"Then there is no use in trying to do good at all," said the young boy with a sigh.

"Nay, my son, though the best that we can offer is most unworthy the acceptance of the Lord, yet will he graciously smile upon the feeble efforts of his servants to please him. I have read somewhere a beautiful Eastern tale which may help to explain my meaning.

"A poor Arab was travelling in the desert, when he met with a spring of clear sweet sparkling water. Accustomed as he was to

brackish wells, to his simple mind it appeared that such water as this was worthy of a monarch ; and, filling his leathern bottle from the spring, he determined to go and present it to the Caliph himself.

“The poor man travelled a considerable distance before he reached the presence of his sovereign, and laid his humble offering at his feet. The Caliph did not despise the little gift brought to him with so much trouble ; he ordered some of the water to be poured into a cup, drank of it, and thanking the Arab with a smile, ordered him to be presented with a reward.

“The courtiers around pressed forward, eager to taste of this wonderful water ; but, to the surprise of all, the Caliph forbade them to touch even a single drop.

“After the poor Arab had quitted the royal presence with a light and joyful heart, the Caliph turned to his courtiers, and thus explained the motives of his conduct :—

“‘During the travels of the Arab,’ said he, ‘the water in his leathern bottle had become impure and very distasteful. But it was an offering of loyalty and love, and as such I

received it with pleasure. But I well knew that had I suffered another to drink of it, he would not have concealed his disgust; and therefore I forbade you to touch the draught, least the heart of the poor man should have been wounded!''

"What a kind thoughtful Caliph!" cried the child.

"Now," continued his mother, "all that we sinners can present to our King is like the tainted water brought by the Arab, though, like him, we may fancy it good and pure, worthy the acceptance of our Lord. But he will not reject, he will not despise, the little offering of love and faith; for he hath promised that even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose its reward."





XXXVIII.

Oh! what can Little Hands do?



H! what can little hands do
To please the King of Heaven?
The little hands some work may try
To help the poor in misery,—
Such grace to mine be given!

Oh! what can little lips do
To please the King of Heaven?
The little lips can praise and pray,
And gentle words of kindness say,—
Such grace to mine be given!

Oh! what can little eyes do
To please the King of Heaven?
The little eyes can upward look,
Can learn to read God's holy book,—
Such grace to mine be given!

Oh! what can little hearts do
To please the King of Heaven?
The hearts, if God his Spirit send,
Can love and trust their Saviour, Friend,—
Such grace to mine be given!

Though small is all we *can* do
To please the King of Heaven;
Let hearts, and hands, and lips unite
To serve the Saviour with delight,—
Such grace to mine be given!



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